

SHAPING AUSTIN: BUILDING THE COMPLETE COMMUNITY

A Framework for the Future

Growth Concept Map

Comprehensive Plan Building Blocks

Building Block 1: Land Use and Transportation

Building Block 2: Housing and Neighborhoods

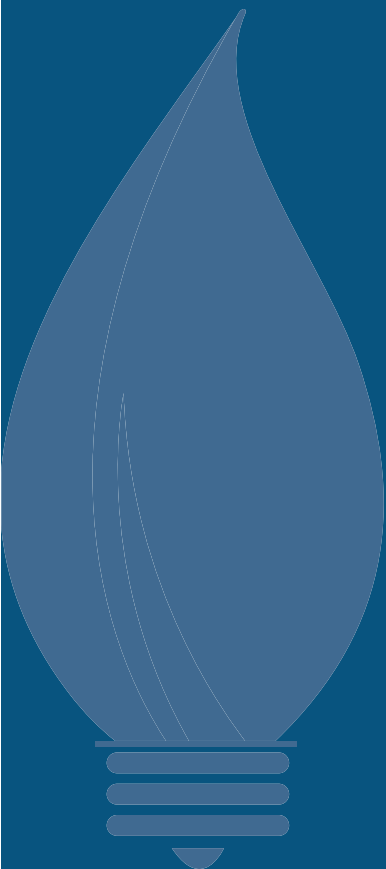
Building Block 3: Economy

Building Block 4: Conservation and Environment

Building Block 5: City Facilities and Services

Building Block 6: Society

Building Block 7: Creativity



SHAPING AUSTIN: BUILDING THE COMPLETE COMMUNITY

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

Achieving the goal of complete communities across Austin requires more than a vision statement. While the vision describes the type of place Austin should become as it approaches its bicentennial; it does not identify the steps to make it happen. The framework for realizing the vision is contained in the growth concept map and building blocks.

- **Growth Concept Map.** The growth concept map (Figure 4.5) applies the Imagine Austin vision statement to the city's physical development. Generated through a public scenario-building process, it defines how we plan to accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed use areas, open space, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years.
- **Building Blocks.** The building blocks contain broad-ranging policies to guide implementation of the vision. They cover 14 elements, including 10 required by the Austin City Charter (see Appendix A).

Building Block	Element
1. Land Use and Transportation	Land Use* and Transportation* Urban Design Historic Preservation
2. Housing and Neighborhoods	Housing* Neighborhoods
3. Economy	Economy*
4. Conservation and Environment	Conservation & Environment*
5. City Facilities and Services	Wastewater, Potable Water, and Drainage* Solid Waste* Energy* Public Safety* Public Building*
6. Society	Recreation and Open Space* Health and Human Services* Children, Families, and Education
7. Creativity	Arts, Culture, and Creativity

* Required by City Charter; in some cases, Charter elements have been reorganized

Developed with extensive public involvement, the growth concept map series depicts how Austin should accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed use developments, open space, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years.

GROWTH CONCEPT MAP

The vision statement sets forth guidance for the city's growth and development for the next 30 years. The growth concept is illustrated by a series of maps. The growth concept map (Figure 4.5) applies the vision statement to show how the city should evolve over the next several decades. It is informed by existing development patterns, planned projects, and small-area plans, as well as environmental features (Figure 4.1), and existing and planned transportation networks (Figures 4.2 through 4.4).

Developed through an extensive public involvement process, the growth concept map illustrates the desired manner to accommodate new residents, jobs, open space, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years. During a series of public meetings, more than 450 participants created over 60 maps illustrating where Austin's growth should go over the next three decades. City staff, consultants, and the Citizen's Advisory Task Force reviewed the maps for common patterns, synthesized them into four distinct scenarios, and developed a "trend" scenario map for comparison.

The five scenarios were measured using "sustainability indicators" developed from the vision statement. These indicators included such measures as the acres of land developed, greenhouse gas emissions, the cost of public infrastructure, average travel times, and percentage of housing near transit stops for each of the scenarios. Through the next round of public meetings and surveys, the public rated each of the scenarios using the indicator results. Public input was solicited through community events, newspaper surveys, door to door outreach, newsletters, social media, business and organizational meetings, and one-on-one conversations.

A growth scenario was created using public input, planned developments, and existing neighborhood plans to illustrate how Austin should grow through 2039. The scenario was further tested and refined into the growth concept map (Figure 4.5). More detail on the public process used to create the scenarios and growth concept map is included in Appendix B.

The growth concept map series embodies the Imagine Austin vision statement and represents where the city will focus future investments to support activity centers and corridors, and an expanded transportation system. The growth concept map:

- Promotes a compact and connected city
- Promotes infill and redevelopment as opposed to typical low-density "greenfield" development
- Focuses new development in activity corridors and centers accessible by walking, bicycling, and transit as well as by car
- Provides convenient access to jobs and employment centers

- Protects existing open space and natural resources such as creeks, rivers, lakes, and floodplains
- Directs growth away from the Barton Springs Zone of the Edwards Aquifer recharge and contributing zones and other water-supply watersheds
- Improves air quality and reduces greenhouse gas emissions
- Expands the transit network and increases transit use
- Reduces vehicle miles traveled
- Reduces per capita water consumption
- Provides parks and open space close to where people live, work, and play

Growth Concept Map Series

The growth concept map series consists of five maps setting out key environmental features, transportation connections, and growth patterns.

Figure 4.1 Environmental Resources

Our vision for Austin is a “green” city – a place that is environmentally aware, improves the health of our residents, and protects the region’s vast environmental resources. The Environmental Resource map (Figure 4.1) illustrates the existing network of parks, preserves, and other open spaces, as well as environmentally sensitive water resources such as waterways, springs, floodplains, and the recharging/contributing zones of the Edwards Aquifer. The environmental features illustrated by Figure 4.1, in addition to species habitat, tree canopy, and agricultural resources (Figures 4.8–4.10) are key environmental resources in Austin. These diverse elements provide multiple benefits including protection of natural resources and enhanced recreation and transportation options.

Environmentally sensitive features, in addition to existing development patterns and roadways, help to shape and inform the location of the activity centers and corridors illustrated by the growth concept map. By promoting a compact and connected city, Austin seeks to direct development away from sensitive environmental resources, protect existing open space and natural resources, and improve air and water quality.

GROWTH CONCEPT MAP SERIES

The growth concept map series and the activity centers and corridors are conceptual and provide direction for future growth; however, they are not parcel-specific, nor do they carry the legal weight of zoning designations or other land use regulations. Per state law, a comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE DEFINED

The Conservation Fund defines green infrastructure as “strategically planned and managed networks of natural lands, working landscapes and other open spaces that conserve ecosystem values and functions and provide associated benefits to human populations.”

The elements of Austin’s green infrastructure network include our parks, the urban forest, urban trails, greenways, rivers, creeks, lakes, gardens, urban agriculture, open spaces, and wildlife habitat, and stormwater features that mimic natural hydrology – and the relationships between them and the rest of the city.

Figure 4.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks

To realize Austin’s vision, new development and redevelopment must occur in a connected and pedestrian-friendly pattern. Activity centers and corridors illustrated on the growth concept map are pedestrian-friendly, walkable, and bikable areas. By improving bicycle and pedestrian networks, the city can address many of the challenges facing Austin, including motor vehicle congestion, commute times, air quality, transportation costs, lack of connectivity, bicycle safety, and recreational access.

Figure 4.2 illustrates major urban trails that connect activity centers. Urban trails serve recreation and transportation functions, including biking and hiking, and also provide important environmental benefits by creating open space linkages and expanding the city’s green infrastructure network. While not included on Figure 4.2, the pedestrian sidewalk network is also essential to accessibility. Austin is continuing to expand the sidewalk network and eliminate gaps to improve walkability throughout Austin.

Figure 4.3 Transit Networks

To achieve our vision for Austin, the city’s activity centers and corridors need to support, and be supported by, an expanded transit network that is efficient, reliable, and cost-effective. The transit network will help to reduce sprawl, decrease congestion and vehicle miles traveled, improve air quality, promote infill and redevelopment, and reduce household transportation costs. Several agencies have been working together to plan and develop rail and high-capacity bus lines that will provide greater transportation options and impact where people and businesses choose to locate. The transit network is designed to improve connectedness and better link centers and corridors. Where final locations have not been determined, transit stops are identified as “proposed.” As more detailed planning occurs, these may move. When this happens, the associated activity center should move as well.

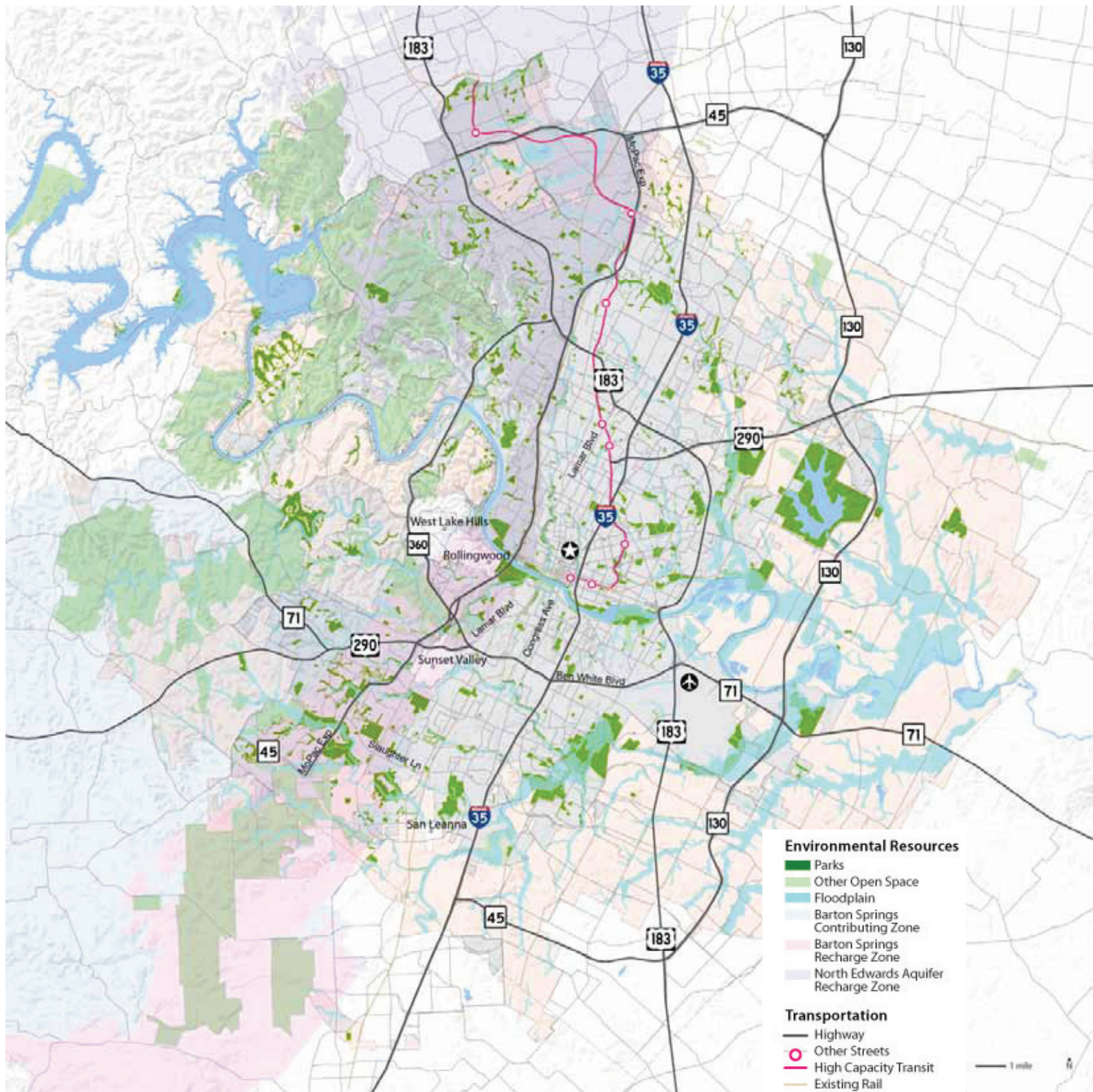
Figure 4.4 Roadway Networks

While Imagine Austin envisions a long-term shift toward transit, walking, and biking, an expanded and improved roadway network is also important. Figure 4.4 identifies major roadway improvements, from developing a complete arterial network to managed or express lanes on Loop 1 and Interstate 35.

Figure 4.5 Growth Concept Map

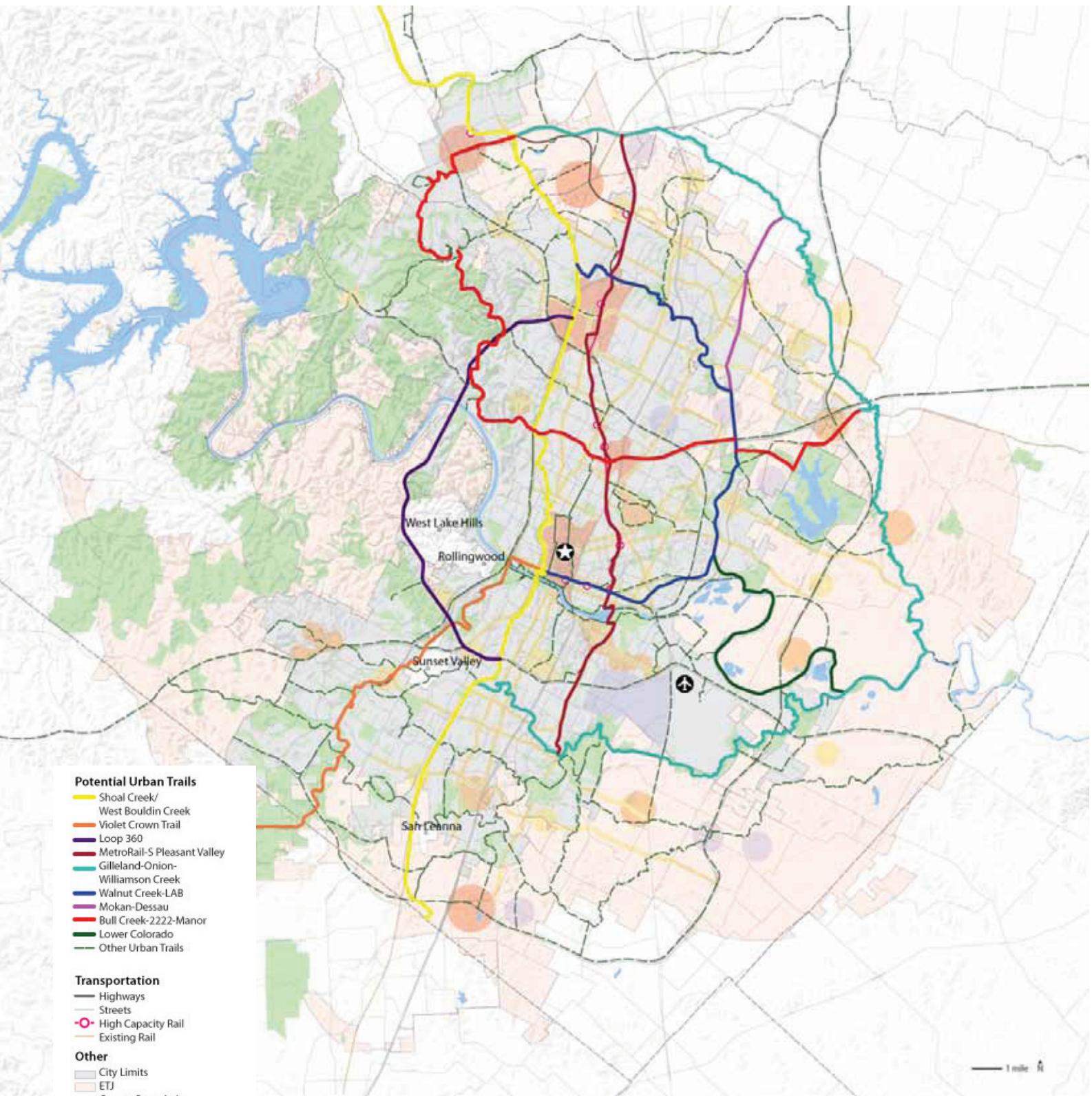
The final map in the growth concept map series ties the previous four together, illustrating how Austin in the future should coordinate transportation features—roads, transit, and urban trails—with activity centers and corridors, in such a way as to reduce degradation of Austin’s environmental resources. This map is followed by detailed definitions of its features.

Figure 4.1 Environmental Resources



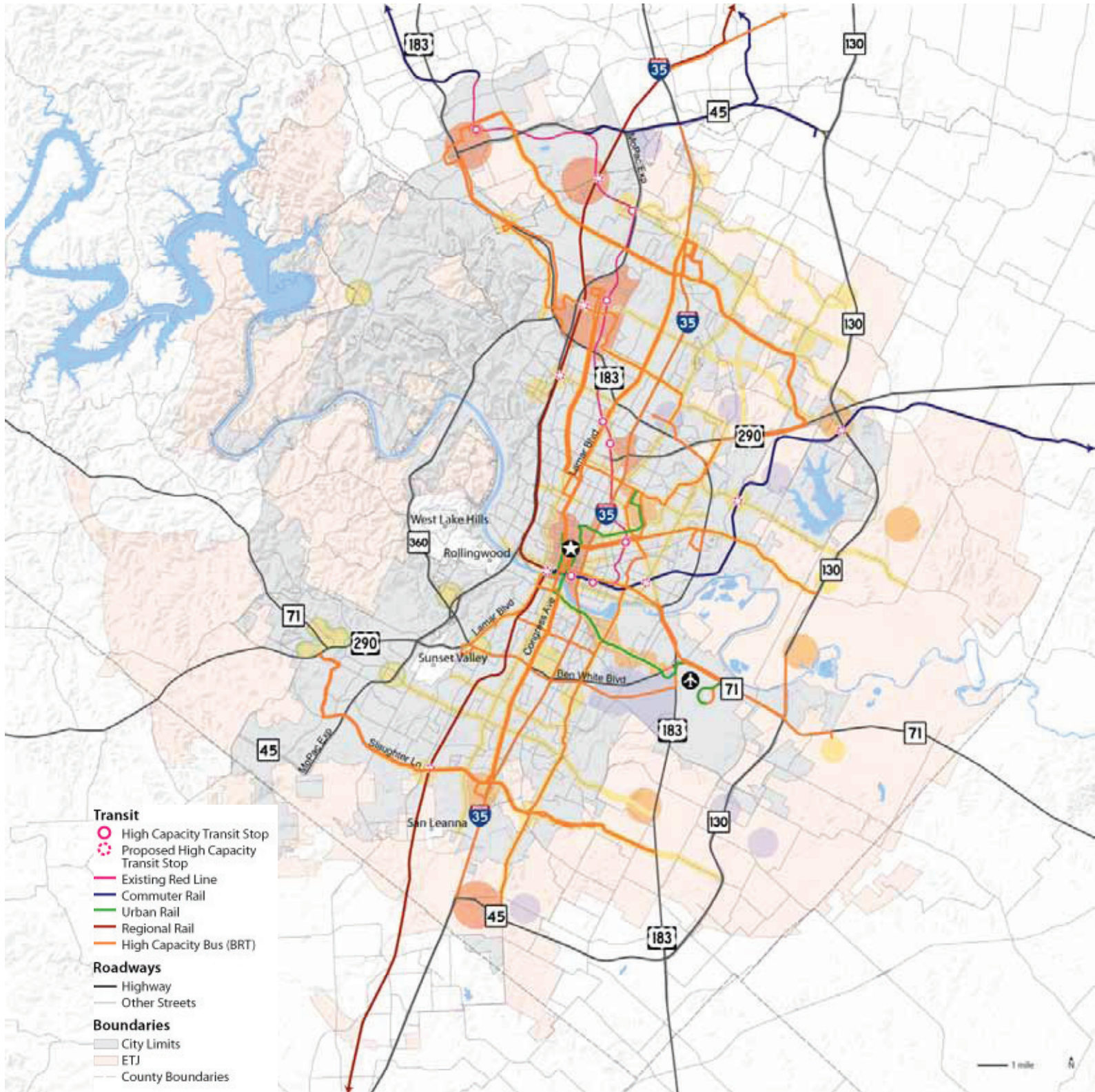
The future open space network contains several elements and includes parks, greenways, nature preserves, agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive land such as floodplains, steep slopes, and those with features such as sink holes, caves, or significant habitat.

Figure 4.2 **Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks**



Activity centers and corridors illustrated on the growth concept map are pedestrian-friendly, walkable, and bikable areas. Urban trails serve recreation and transportation functions, including biking and hiking, and also provide important environmental benefits by creating open space linkages and expanding the city's green infrastructure network.

Figure 4.3 Transit Networks



The future transit network includes the existing Capital MetroRail red line, regional rail, commuter rail, urban rail, and bus rapid transit. Local bus routes are an essential element of the transit network; however, due to route changes and for the sake of a more understandable map, local bus service is not illustrated on this map.

Figure 4.4 Roadway Networks

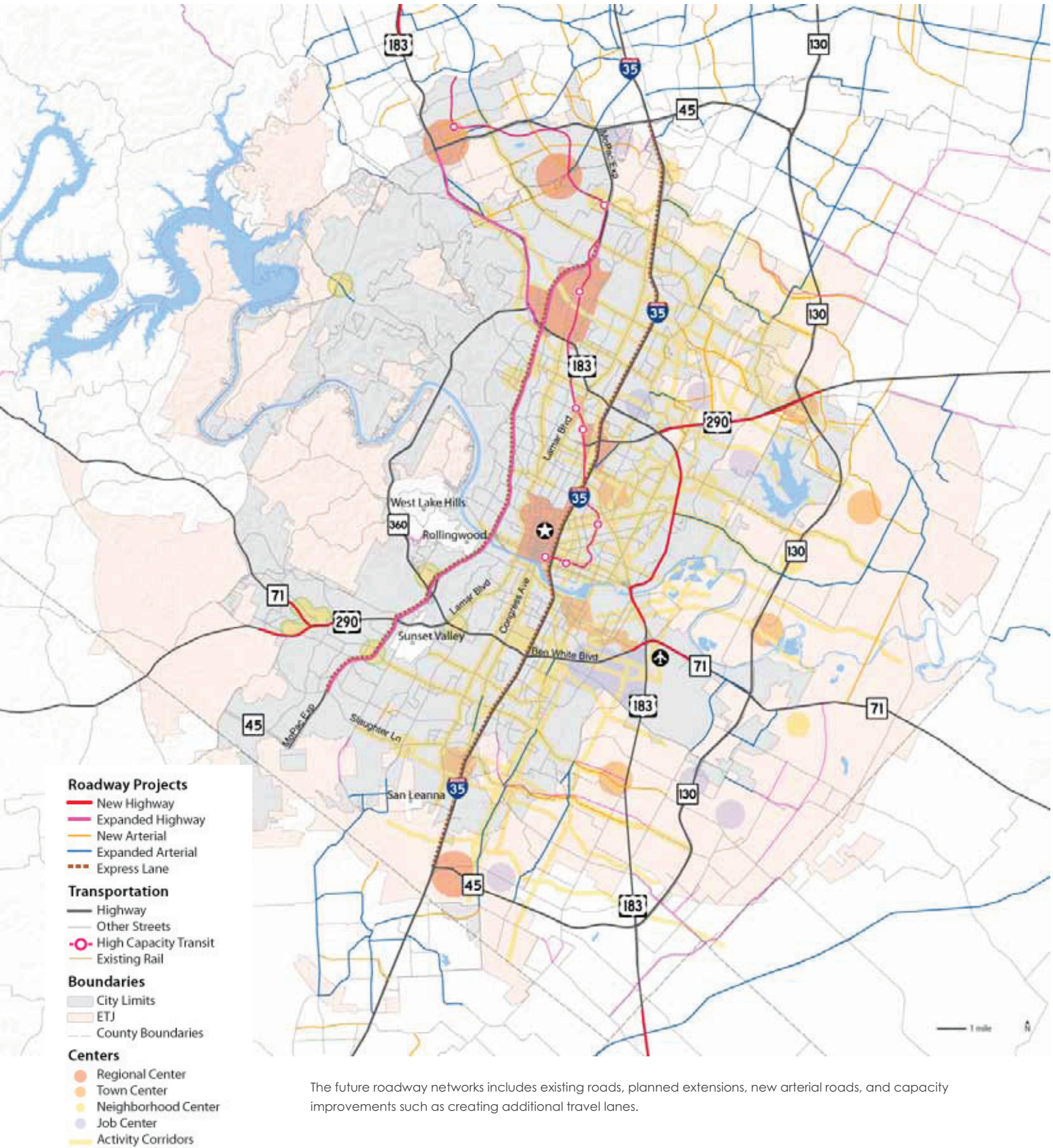
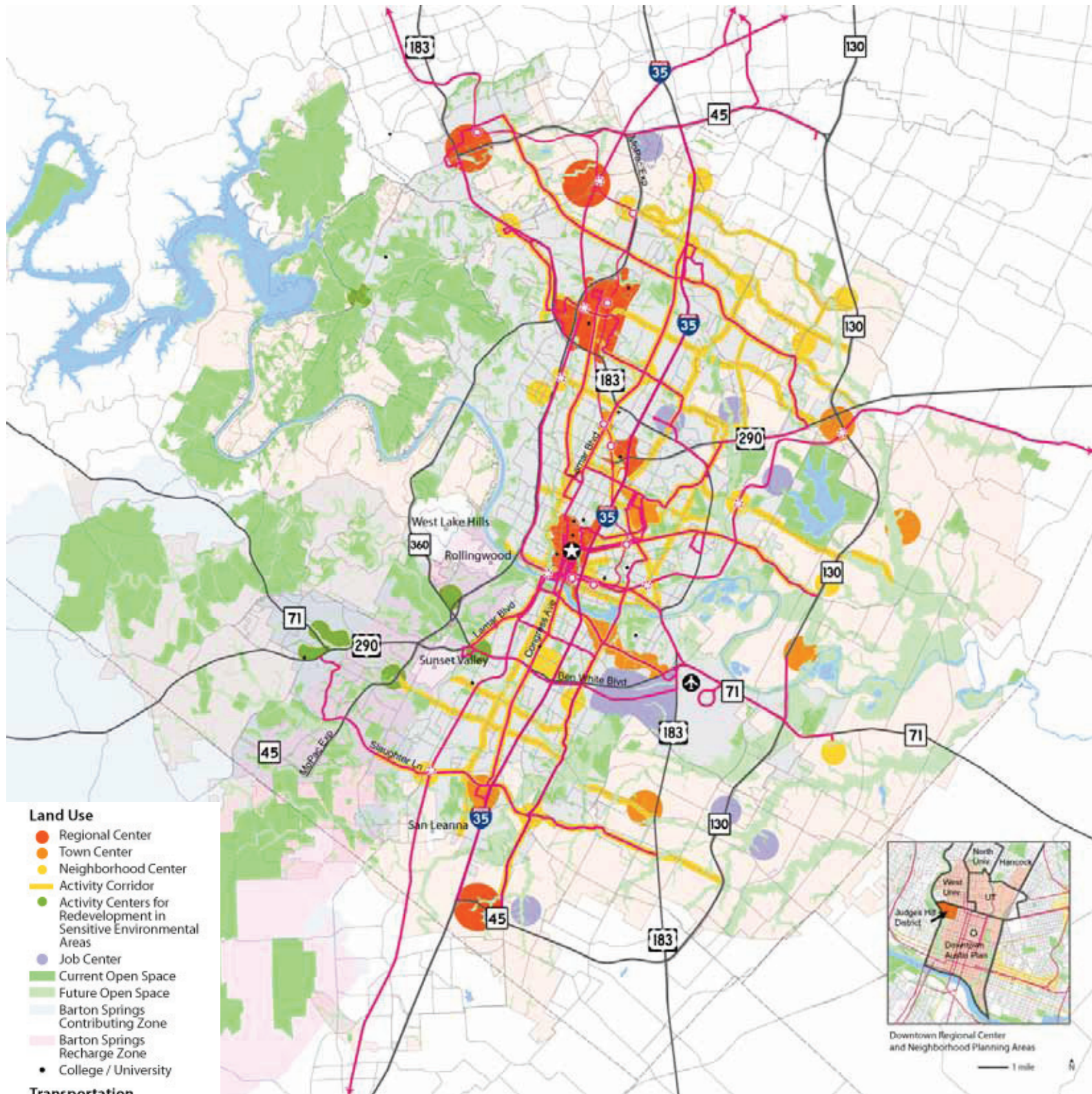


Figure 4.5 Growth Concept Map



Map Disclaimers: A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries. This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries. This product has been produced by the Planning and Development Review Department for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.

Growth Concept Map Definitions

Activity Centers and Corridors

The growth concept map assembles compact and walkable activity centers and corridors, as well as job centers, and coordinates them with future transportation improvements. These centers and corridors allow people to reside, work, shop, access services, people watch, recreate, and hang out without traveling far distances. Within them, the design and scale of buildings and the design and availability of parks and gathering spaces will welcome people of all ages and abilities. They will be walkable, bikable, and connected to one another, the rest of the city, and the region by roads, transit, bicycle routes and lanes, and trails.

The activity centers and corridors included on this map identify locations for additional people and jobs above what currently exists on the ground. Unlike more detailed small-area plan maps, the growth concept map provides broad direction for future growth and is not parcel specific. Centers that are already established by existing small-area plans, such as those for East Riverside Drive or Highland Mall, are drawn to reflect those plans. Centers without small-area plans are simply shown with a circle, indicating scale and general location. Specifying boundaries for these centers may occur through small-area plans or general guidelines for implementing this plan.

Centers are generally focused on one or more major transit stops. The greatest density of people and activity will be located around these stops. Surrounding these dense hubs, centers will feature a mix of retail, offices, open space and parks, public uses and services such as libraries and government offices, and a variety of housing choices. Because of their generally compact nature, it will be a quick trip to travel from one side of a center to the other by foot, bicycle, transit, or automobile. There are three types of activity centers—regional, town, and neighborhood.

While a corridor may feature the same variety of uses as a center, its linear nature spreads uses along a roadway. Walking may be suitable for shorter trips; however, longer ones along a corridor can be made by bicycling, transit, or automobile. Just as there are different types of centers, a corridor's character will depend on factors such as road width, traffic volume, the size and configuration of lots, and existing uses. Along different segments of these corridors, there may be multi-story mixed use buildings, apartment buildings, shops, public uses, or offices, as well as townhouses, rowhouses, duplexes, and single-family houses. Rules for developing within the activity centers and corridors should be carefully designed to achieve their intent. In particular, new development in these areas will need to consider two aspects of Austin's affordability problem: providing market-rate housing and preserving existing, as well as creating new affordable housing.

Regional Centers

Regional centers are the most urban places in the region. These centers are and will become the retail, cultural, recreational, and entertainment destinations for Central Texas. These are the places where the greatest density of people and jobs and the tallest

buildings in the region will be located. Housing in regional centers will mostly consist of low to high-rise apartments, mixed use buildings, rowhouses, and townhouses. However, other housing types, such as single-family units, may be included depending on the location and character of the center.

The densities, buildings heights, and overall character of a center will depend on its location. The central regional center encompassing Downtown, the University of Texas, the Concordia University redevelopment, and West Campus is the most urban. It includes low to high-rise residential and office buildings; local, state, and federal government office buildings; the Texas State Capitol building; cultural offerings and several entertainment districts; shopping; and single-family neighborhoods. Other, future regional centers, like Robinson Ranch or Southside (at the intersection of toll road State Highway 45 and Interstate 35) will likely have a dense central hub surrounded by well-connected, but lower density development.

Regional centers will range in size between approximately 25,000-45,000 people and 5,000-25,000 jobs.

Town Centers

Although less intense than a regional centers, town centers are also where many people will live and work. Town centers will have large and small employers, although fewer than in regional centers. These employers will have regional customer and employee bases, and provide goods and services for the center as well as the surrounding areas. The buildings found in a town center will range in size from one to three-story houses, duplexes, townhouses, and rowhouses, to low to midrise apartments, mixed use buildings, and office buildings. These centers will also be important hubs in the transit system.

The Mueller redevelopment in Central Austin is an example of an emerging town center. Presently at Mueller, there are local and regional-serving retail establishments, the Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas, and Seton Healthcare Family offices. Upon build-out, Mueller expects to include 4.2 million square feet of retail, offices, medical space, and film production, as well as 10,000 residents.

Town centers will range in size between approximately 10,000-30,000 people and 5,000-20,000 jobs.

Neighborhood Centers

The smallest and least intense of the three mixed use centers are neighborhood centers. As with the regional and town centers, neighborhood centers are walkable, bikable, and supported by transit. The greatest density of people and activities in neighborhood centers will likely be concentrated on several blocks or around one or two intersections. However, depending on localized conditions, different neighborhood centers can be very different places. If a neighborhood center is designated on an existing commercial area, such as a shopping center or mall, it could represent redevelopment or the addi-



tion of housing. A new neighborhood center may be focused on a dense, mixed-use core surrounded by a mix of housing. In other instances, new or redevelopment may occur incrementally and concentrate people and activities along several blocks or around one or two intersections. Neighborhood centers will be more locally focused than either a regional or a town center. Businesses and services—grocery and department stores, doctors and dentists, shops, branch libraries, dry cleaners, hair salons, schools, restaurants, and other small and local businesses—will generally serve the center and surrounding neighborhoods.

Neighborhood centers range in size between approximately 5,000-10,000 people and 2,500-7,000 jobs.

Corridors

Activity corridors have a dual nature. They are the connections that link activity centers and other key destinations to one another and allow people to travel throughout the city and region by bicycle, transit, or automobile. Corridors are also characterized by a variety of activities and types of buildings located along the roadway — shopping, restaurants and cafés, parks, schools, single-family houses, apartments, public buildings, houses of worship, mixed use buildings, and offices. Along many corridors there will be both large and small redevelopment sites. These redevelopment opportunities may be continuous along stretches of the corridor. There may also be a series of small neighborhood centers, connected by the roadway. Other corridors may have fewer redevelopment opportunities, but already have a mixture of uses, and could provide critical transportation connections. As a corridor evolves, sites that do not redevelop may transition from one use to another, such as a service station becoming a restaurant or a large retail space being divided into several storefronts. To improve mobility along an activity corridor, new and redevelopment should reduce per capita car use and increase walking, bicycling, and transit use. Intensity of land use should correspond to the availability of quality transit, public space, and walkable destinations. Site design should use building arrangement and open space to reduce walking distance to transit and destinations, achieve safety and comfort, and draw people outdoors.

Job Centers

Job centers accommodate those businesses not well-suited for residential or environmentally-sensitive areas. These centers take advantage of existing transportation infrastructure such as arterial roadways, freeways, or the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Job centers will mostly contain office parks, manufacturing, warehouses, logistics, and other businesses with similar demands and operating characteristics. They should nevertheless become more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, in part by better accommodating services for the people who work in those centers. While many of these centers are currently best served by car, the growth concept map offers transportation choices such as light rail and bus rapid transit to increase commuter options.

Open Space Network

The open space network includes existing and future open space. Elements of the open space network include parks, greenways, nature preserves, agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive land. Areas within floodplains, on steep slopes, or with significant environmental features such as sinkholes, caves, or significant wildlife habitat are classified as environmentally sensitive.

High Capacity Transit and Transit Stops

High capacity transit and transit stops include the existing Capital MetroRail Red Line and stops and planned transit routes and new stops. High capacity transit includes regional rail, commuter rail, urban rail, and bus rapid transit. Regular bus routes are not illustrated on the growth concept map. Where final locations have not been determined, transit stops are identified as "proposed." As more detailed planning occurs, these may move. When this happens, the associated activity center should move as well.

Highways and Other Streets

This feature of the growth concept map illustrates existing roads, planned extensions, new arterial roads, and capacity improvements such as additional travel lanes.

Activity Centers for Redevelopment in Sensitive Environmental Areas

Five centers are located over the recharge or contributing zones of the Barton Springs Zone of the Edwards Aquifer or within water-supply watersheds. These centers are located on already developed areas and, in some instances, provide opportunities to address long-standing water quality issues and provide walkable areas in and near existing neighborhoods. State of the art development practices will be required of any redevelopment to improve stormwater retention and the water quality flowing into the aquifer or other drinking water sources. These centers should also be carefully evaluated to fit within their infrastructure and environmental context. One of the Land Use and Transportation policies, LUT 20 (p. 107), clarifies the intent, "Ensure that redevelopment in the Edwards Aquifer's recharge and contributing zones maintains the quantity and quality of recharge of the aquifer."

Other Development within City Limits

While most new development will be absorbed by centers and corridors, development will happen in other areas within the city limits to serve neighborhood needs and create complete communities. Infill development can occur as redevelopment of obsolete office, retail, or residential sites or as new development on vacant land within largely developed areas. The type of infill housing will vary with site locations, small-area plans, and development regulations and include single-family houses, duplexes, secondary apartments, townhouses, row houses, and smaller-scaled apartments. New commercial, office, larger apartments, and institutional uses such as schools and churches, may also



Shops at The Triangle



Typical suburban-style shopping center



be located in areas outside of centers and corridors. The design of new development should be sensitive to and complement its context. It should also be connected by sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and transit to the surrounding area and the rest of the city. Not all land within the city limits will be developed. Some may remain or enter into agricultural production; continue as single-family houses, duplexes, and apartments; or become part of the planned open space network. While the counties are able to engage in long-range planning efforts, they cannot zone land.

Other Development within the Austin Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

The extraterritorial jurisdiction is the unincorporated land within five miles of Austin's City limits that is not within the extraterritorial jurisdiction or municipal limits of another city. It is where only Austin is authorized to annex land. The City of Austin in collaboration with Travis County (and, to a lesser extent, Williamson and Hays Counties) regulates land subdivision, water quality regulations, and site plans. While it is able to engage in long-range planning efforts, it cannot zone land. Well-planned future development can minimize sprawl when the City collaborates with County governments. Targeted infrastructure investments and other incentives to manage development in an organized and thoughtful manner will be necessary to meet the contingencies of continued growth in the extraterritorial jurisdiction. Wherever possible, new development should be directed to centers and corridors designated on the growth concept map, or occur in or adjacent to areas of existing development, and should serve to complete communities at Austin's edge. In addition, it should, when and where feasible, it should be connected by transit, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes to existing and planned development.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BUILDING BLOCKS

The Comprehensive Plan building blocks are the backbone of Imagine Austin. Each building block includes a summary of key issues and challenges for the future, policies to address those challenges, and selected best practices.³ The building block policies were developed through public input from community forums and surveys, as well as input from the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force and City of Austin departments.

Many of Imagine Austin's policies cut across building blocks. This overlap creates synergistic opportunities to make a greater impact by implementing one program or project that responds to several policies. The interrelationships are highlighted in blue with a reference that directs the reader to a similar policy from one of the other building blocks.

The synergies also play out in the core principles for action (introduced in Chapter 1) and the complete communities concept (introduced in Chapter 2). At the beginning of each building block, a summary matrix illustrates how the policies within that building block relate to Austin's vision for a city of complete communities. A "solid" circle means that the policies directly implement a particular complete community element. While not every policy links to every complete community element, all of the policies work together to achieve Austin's vision.

³ More detail on existing trends and issues for each building block can be found in Chapter 2 and in the Austin Community Inventory <http://www.imagineaustin.net/inventory.htm>.

TRANSITIONS BETWEEN LAND USES

Harmonious + People-oriented

Creating the compact and connected city envisioned by this plan requires establishing harmonious transitions between different types of land uses, such as retail and residential areas or buildings of different heights and scales. New and redevelopment along corridors and at the edges of centers should complement existing development such as adjacent neighborhoods.



Creating these transitions requires addressing:

- Local context
- Land uses
- Accessibility and transportation needs
- Building setbacks, building heights
- Design elements such as:
 - planting
 - building massing
 - lighting
 - location of parking
- Building orientation



Regional Center

The growth concept map illustrates how Austin plans to accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed-use areas, open space, and transportation infrastructure in the next 30 years. As Austin grows, the growth concept map directs new and redevelopment to focused centers of varying sizes. Most centers are connected by activity corridors, which serve a dual purpose of enhancing mobility and concentrating development, maintaining neighborhood character and better accommodating walking, bicycling, taking transit, and driving.

See pages 96-98 for a full description of activity centers and corridors.

The illustration below shows how the centers and activity corridors in the growth concept map relate to one another, while fitting into the overall fabric of the city. The photographs are representative of some of the ways these centers and corridors may develop.



Town Center



Neighborhood Center

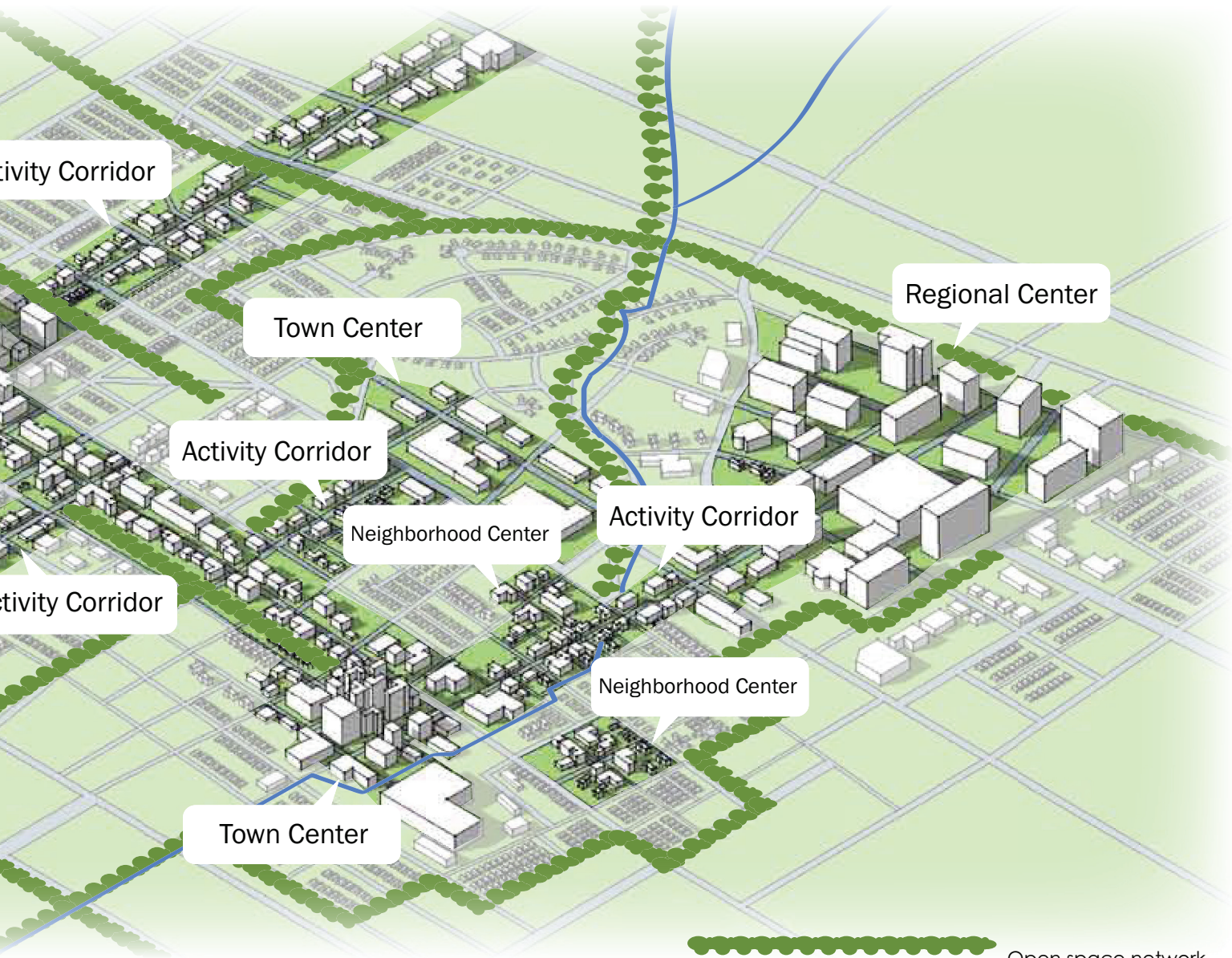


Activity Corridor



Activity Corridor

CENTERS AND CORRIDORS



Open space network

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

LIVABLE

- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable, Compact, and Walkable Development
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment, Food, and Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

Austin experienced significant growth during the last half of the twentieth century. Between 1960 and 2010, the land area expanded by more than 400 percent, from almost 56 square miles to over 300 square miles. During the last decade, our land area increased by nearly 20 percent. Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction represent an area of about 620 square miles. This is more than double the size of Chicago. Although 38 percent of Austin's land area is considered undeveloped, much of it is environmentally sensitive and less suitable for development.

The range of transportation options available can profoundly affect the development of a city. For example, a new high-speed road may spur low-density commercial and residential development, which does not support high-quality public transit. This is what happened during the last decades of the twentieth century as the extension of the city's freeway and highway system allowed development to spread north and south of Austin's city limits. However, further in Austin's past we can see how transportation investments affected our city's evolution. Our first suburb, the compact and walkable Hyde Park (now an inner-city neighborhood), was designed to be served by transit which allowed residents to live removed from the bustle of the central city and commute to Downtown in the relative comfort of an electrified trolley. Recent Capital Metropolitan Transportation Agency and City of Austin transit plans for rail and high-capacity bus lines seek to provide

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Over the last century, Austin has experienced increasing population, urbanization, and outward expansion.
- Modest infill and redevelopment have occurred in older areas of Austin, though at a much slower pace than lower-density suburban development.
- While Austin remains the largest jurisdiction in the five-county Austin region, the city's share of population and employment is decreasing.
- Complex policies and regulations have greatly impacted land use and development in Austin.
- Areas located along a north-south axis of the city and in the North Burnet/Gateway planning area and Robinson Ranch in the northern portion of the city are identified as most likely to develop or redevelop.

transportation options which will have a greater influence on where residents choose to live and work. Several recent planning initiatives, such as East Riverside Drive, Airport Boulevard, and North Burnet/Gateway, concentrate on creating places to provide these choices. A retooled transportation system will lead to the compact and walkable places envisioned in this plan.

Austin's historic assets include neighborhoods, buildings, and sites reflecting Austin's cultural, ethnic, social, economic, political, and architectural history. Many of which lack formal historic designation. Designated historic resources include National Register properties and districts, Texas Historic Landmarks, Austin's Historic Landmark designation, and Local Historic Districts. In addition, Austin has many cultural resources lacking formal historic designation—public art, cultural centers, museums, institutions, buildings, landscapes, and iconic businesses and buildings. Austin is also home to a number of museums and research libraries.

Austin has an active historic preservation program. The City of Austin Historic Preservation Office mission is to protect and enhance historic resources. Austin's Historic Landmark Commission meets monthly to review historic zoning cases, review some demolition permits, and maintains the Austin survey of cultural resources.

Austin is consistently ranked as a desirable community in which to live and work by a number of "Best Of" lists. Managing the success of our city's increasing popularity and overcoming the results of the last half century of growth presents us with significant challenges and opportunities. We must change the way we allow our city to be built. Instead of sprawling retail centers, office parks, and subdivisions accessed by freeways, we must create an efficient transportation network to serve a city of complete communities, activity centers and corridors. In the face of this change, we also need to preserve our unique places, open space, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Commuters at the MLK, Jr Transit Station



Key Challenges for the Future

- Counteracting the prevailing trend of sprawling development that consumes vacant land and natural resources, reduces air and water quality, contributes to global warming, and diminishes the natural environment.
- Preserving our natural resources and systems by limiting development in sensitive environmental areas, floodplains, creeks, and riparian areas, and maintaining and protecting open space.
- Increasing the supply and variety of housing in and near employment centers to allow more people to live closer to their jobs.
- Meeting the housing and employment needs of a rapidly growing and demographically changing population in a sustainable manner.
- Promoting regional planning and increased coordination between local governments, especially Travis County, agencies, districts, and the State of Texas to address major land use, infrastructure and transportation challenges.
- Coordinating land use, transportation, environmental, and economic development policies to address the inefficiency of infrastructure having to keep up with greenfield development and incentivize infill and redevelopment.
- Improving land development regulations in place for the extraterritorial jurisdiction to improve clarity, increase certainty, and produce outcomes in alignment with Imagine Austin.
- Increasing coordination between local governments to promote more efficient land use and transportation policies and investments. Coordinating on infrastructure is particularly important within Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- Maintaining historic neighborhood character and preserving historic resources — especially in the urban core — as the city continues to grow.
- Providing more shopping opportunities, healthy food choices, and services in areas of Austin underserved by these daily necessities.
- Implementing climate change solutions through more proactive regional cooperation.

FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED:

Austin is accessible. Our transportation network provides a wide variety of options that are efficient, reliable, and cost-effective to serve the diverse needs and capabilities of our citizens. Public and private sectors work together to improve our air quality and reduce congestion in a collaborative and creative manner.

BEST PRACTICE: LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE REVISION | RALEIGH, NC

Raleigh revised its development code as a priority action identified in the city's new comprehensive plan. Approximately 150 action items — including strategies for mixed use and transit-oriented development, affordable housing, and green building design — were either explicitly proscribed or hindered by existing regulations. Moreover, the development code, amended in a piecemeal fashion across different decades, had become overly complicated and difficult to understand. The process resulted in a draft unified development ordinance that consolidates all development-related regulations (zoning, subdivision, site development, planting, historic preservation, sidewalks and streets, environmental, and so on) into a single user-friendly document. The draft code includes new zoning, design, and development standards plus graphics and charts to illustrate desired outcomes. It supports comprehensive plan implementation, responds to current market trends, and provides greater predictability for developers, citizens, and decision-makers. City Council approval of the draft code is anticipated in 2012.

Reference: City of Raleigh, NC

FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities

BEST PRACTICE: IMPROVED COMPATIBILITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSITIONS, MIAMI 21, MIAMI, FLORIDA

Miami's building boom resulted in high-rise condominiums, parking garages, and commercial buildings that exposed weaknesses in the city's zoning ordinance. Existing codes did not consider building context, height limits, design requirements, and access. Miami became the first major city to adopt a citywide form-based code, known as "Miami 21." The new code divides the city into different zones that focus on building form, design, and relationships between neighboring properties rather than land use. Transitions between commercial areas and adjacent neighborhoods received special consideration through moderate-intensity uses and design standards intended to "step down" intensity. One of the most critical pieces of the code is the concept of "successional zoning." This allows rezoning only to the next most intense zone if the property abuts a more intense zone. This promotes a controlled evolution of the built environment and minimizes opportunities for developers to acquire a property and request a rezoning to a dramatically different intensity or use.

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

LUT P1. Align land use and transportation planning and decision-making to achieve a compact and connected city in line with the growth concept map.

(See also CFS P1, CFS P21)

LUT P2. Promote regional planning and increased coordination between municipalities and county governments to address major land use and transportation challenges. (See also E P14, CE P5, CE P6, CE P16)

LUT P3. Promote development in compact centers, communities, or along corridors that are connected by roads and transit, are designed to encourage walking and bicycling, and reduce health care, housing and transportation costs. (See also HN P4, S P3, C P9)

LUT P4. Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change that include designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites. Recognize that different neighborhoods have different characteristics, and infill and new development should be sensitive to the predominant character of these communities. (See also HN P11, HN P15)

LUT P5. Create healthy and family-friendly communities through development that includes a mix of land uses and housing types, affords realistic opportunities for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel, and provides both community gathering spaces, neighborhood gardens and family farms, parks and safe outdoor play areas for children. (See also HN P1, HN P5, HN P10, CFS P37, CFS P40, S P3, S P12, S P21, S P29, C P14)

LUT P6. Ensure that neighborhoods of modest means have a mix of local-serving retail, employment opportunities, and residential uses. (See also HN P4)

LUT P7. Encourage infill and redevelopment opportunities that place residential, work, and retail land uses in proximity to each other to maximize walking, bicycling, and transit opportunities. (See also HN P7, HN P11, S P11)

LUT P8. Develop land development regulations and standards that are clear and predictable and support the intent and goals of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. (See also E P6)

LUT P9. Develop and maintain consistent fiscal policies to direct public investments associated with growth and development to implement Imagine Austin.

LUT P10. Direct housing and employment growth to activity centers and corridors, preserving and integrating existing affordable housing where possible. (See also HN P2, HN P3)

LUT P11. Promote complete street⁴ design that includes features such as traffic calming elements, street trees, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access throughout Austin, considering the safety needs of people of all ages and abilities. (See also C P17)

LUT P12. Achieve the goals of area transit plans through effective planning, sufficient funding, and continued partnerships between the City of Austin, Capital Metro, and other area transportation providers. (See also HN P4, S P25)

⁴ Roads that are designed to safely accommodate necessary street functions for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and transit riders.

LUT P13. Coordinate with area school districts in the placement of schools and facilities. (See also E P10, E P11, S P17, S P19, S P23, S P28)

LUT P14. Promote safer routes to schools for students of all ages. (See also S P25)

LUT P15. Incorporate provisions for bicycles and pedestrians into all roads such as freeways, toll roads, arterial roadways, and to and from transit stations and stops, and major activity centers. (See also HN P13, CFS P42, S P25)

LUT P16. Educate the public on the long-range need for commitment to a community fully served by a range of transportation options and the benefits of each one.

LUT P17. Develop intermediate transit solutions that allow the City to reach the ultimate goal of a complete transit network over the long-term.

LUT P18. Continue efforts to implement future intercity rail and High Speed Rail in the Austin region. (See also E P16)

LUT P19. Reduce traffic congestion, increase transit use, and encourage alternative transportation modes through such practices as Transportation Demand Management which includes car pooling, flex

time work schedules, and subsidizing transit costs for employees. (See also E P16, CE P10)

LUT P20. Locate industry, warehousing, logistics, manufacturing, and other freight-intensive uses in proximity to adequate transportation and utility infrastructure. (See also E P16)

LUT P21. Ensure that redevelopment in the Edwards Aquifer's recharge and contributing zones maintains the quantity and quality of recharge of the aquifer. (See also CE P2, CFS P12)

LUT P22. Protect Austin's natural resources and environmental systems by limiting land use and transportation development in sensitive environmental areas and preserving areas of open space. (See also CFS P45)

LUT P23. Integrate citywide and regional green infrastructure to include such elements as preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, and the trail system into the urban environment and the transportation network. (See also CE P3, CE P4, CFS P47)

LUT P24. Direct hazardous materials/cargo that are being transported through Austin away from heavily populated or environmental sensitive areas.

BEST PRACTICE: URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES | ROANOKE RESIDENTIAL PATTERN BOOK, ROANOKE, VA

In 2008, Roanoke, Virginia adopted a residential pattern book to preserve and enhance the character and quality of its residential neighborhoods. It serves as an aid for new construction and renovation of existing buildings. The pattern book provides a dictionary of architectural styles found in different types of neighborhoods (downtown, inner-city, suburban areas) and illustrates the characteristics of each housing type. Recommendations for appropriate renovations, materials, paint colors, new construction and additions, landscape, and "green building" practices that will improve and maintain the character of each neighborhood are included. Reference: <http://www.roanokeva.gov/>
Image Credit: Roanoke, Virginia

Maintaining Character Defining Features



“Build new neighborhoods where grocery stores, shopping and dining options, and community services (such as post offices, libraries, healthcare, government offices) are easily accessed from nearby neighborhoods via bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Limit ‘sprawl’ and commutes all over town to access these types of services ”

BEST PRACTICE: COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES

In the US, 28 percent of all trips are less than a mile. While many people are willing to walk or bike short distances, there are few places where it is safe and enjoyable. Complete streets seek to remedy this situation by making it safe and inviting for all users to share public roads. Complete streets should accommodate, but also encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation.

The complete street movement is growing as cities and states across the nation adopt policies and design guidelines. The National Complete Street Coalition provides resources including model state legislation. A policy must routinely "design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation." Cities and states are adopting legislation and design guidelines for streets. There is no one-size fits all design. Each street will vary based on the local context and need. In this Portland, Oregon image, buses, cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians are safely accommodated.

Reference: National Complete Street Coalition; Complete Streets in NJ, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, August 2010. www.njbikeped.org; National Complete Streets Coalition; Image: Portland, Oregon; Kimley-Horn Associates.



LUT P25. Develop a comprehensive network of evacuation routes for all areas of Austin.

LUT P26. Reduce noise pollution from transportation, construction, and other sources.

LUT P27. Decrease light pollution from apartments and single-family houses, signage, commercial buildings, parking lot lights, and street lights.

LUT P28. Evaluate and make needed revisions to parking regulations to ensure they balance the needs of various transportation options with creating good urban form.

URBAN DESIGN POLICIES

LUT P29. Develop accessible community gathering places such as plazas, parks, farmers' markets, sidewalks, and streets in all parts of Austin, especially within activity centers and along activity corridors including Downtown, future TODs, in denser, mixed use communities, and other redevelopment areas, that encourage interaction and provide places for people of all ages to visit and relax. (See also CFS P40, CFS P41, S P3, S P29)

LUT P30. Protect and enhance the unique qualities of Austin's treasured public spaces and places such as parks, plazas, and streetscapes; and, where needed, enrich those areas lacking distinctive visual character or where the character has faded. (See also HN P12)

LUT P31. Define the community's goals for new public and private developments using principles and design guidelines that capture the distinctive, diverse local character of Austin. (See also C P17)

LUT P32. Assure that new development is walkable and bikable and preserves the positive characteristics of existing pedestrian-friendly environments. (See also HN P12, CFS P40, CFS P41, S P43)

LUT P33. Apply high standards of urban design to ensure that "complete streets" are safe and accessible for all users. Encourage people to use alternative forms of transportation that are sensitive to the demands of the Central Texas climate.

LUT P34. Integrate green infrastructure elements such as the urban forest, gardens, green buildings, stormwater treatment and infiltration facilities, and green streets into the urban design of the city through "green" development practices and regulations. (See also CE P3, CE P4, CE P11, CFS P47)

LUT P35. Infuse public art into Austin's urban fabric in streetscapes along roadways and in such places as parks, plazas, and other public gathering places). (See also CFS P44, C P16)

LUT P36. Transform all major streets into vibrant, multi-functional, pedestrian-friendly corridors. (See also S P3)

"We need more 'live here, work here' multi-use development resulting in less vehicular traffic, a greater sense of community, and parks/ped-friendly facilities."

Community Forum Series #1 Participant

HISTORIC PRESERVATION POLICIES

LUT P37. Promote historic, arts, culture, and heritage-based tourism and events.

(See also E P37)

LUT P38. Preserve and interpret historic resources (those objects, buildings, structures, sites, places, or districts with historic, cultural, or aesthetic significance) in Austin for residents and visitors.

(See also C P12, C P13)

LUT P39. Maintain and update inventories of historic resources, including locally significant historic properties not listed on national or state registries, archeological sites, etc.

LUT P40. Increase opportunities for historic and cultural learning at the City's public libraries.

LUT P41. Protect historic buildings, structures, sites, places, and districts in neighborhoods throughout the City.

LUT P42. Retain the character of National Register and local Historic Districts and ensure that development and redevelopment is compatible with historic resources and character. (See also C P18)

LUT P43. Continue to protect and enhance important view corridors such as those of the Texas State Capitol District, Lady Bird Lake, and other public waterways.

LUT P44. Preserve and restore historic parks and recreational areas.

BEST PRACTICE: HISTORIC REHABILITATION BUILDING CODES: NEW JERSEY REHABILITATION SUBCODE | STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In many states, building codes are designed solely for new construction leading to expensive retrofits for existing buildings. In an effort to reduce barriers to building renovation and adaptive reuse, New Jersey adopted a "Rehab Code" in 1999. The code requires structural and safety regulations that work with an existing building's height, area, and fire resistance ratings. In the first year of implementation, the amount of money dedicated to renovation in New Jersey increased by 41 percent. The code has resulted in reduced costs for building owners and increased historic preservation efforts in many older cities across the state.

Reference: <http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/codes/offices/rehab.html>;
Image Credit: NJ Dept. of Community Affairs



Elisabet Ney Museum in Hyde Park neighborhood



Figure 4.6 Combined Future Land Use Map

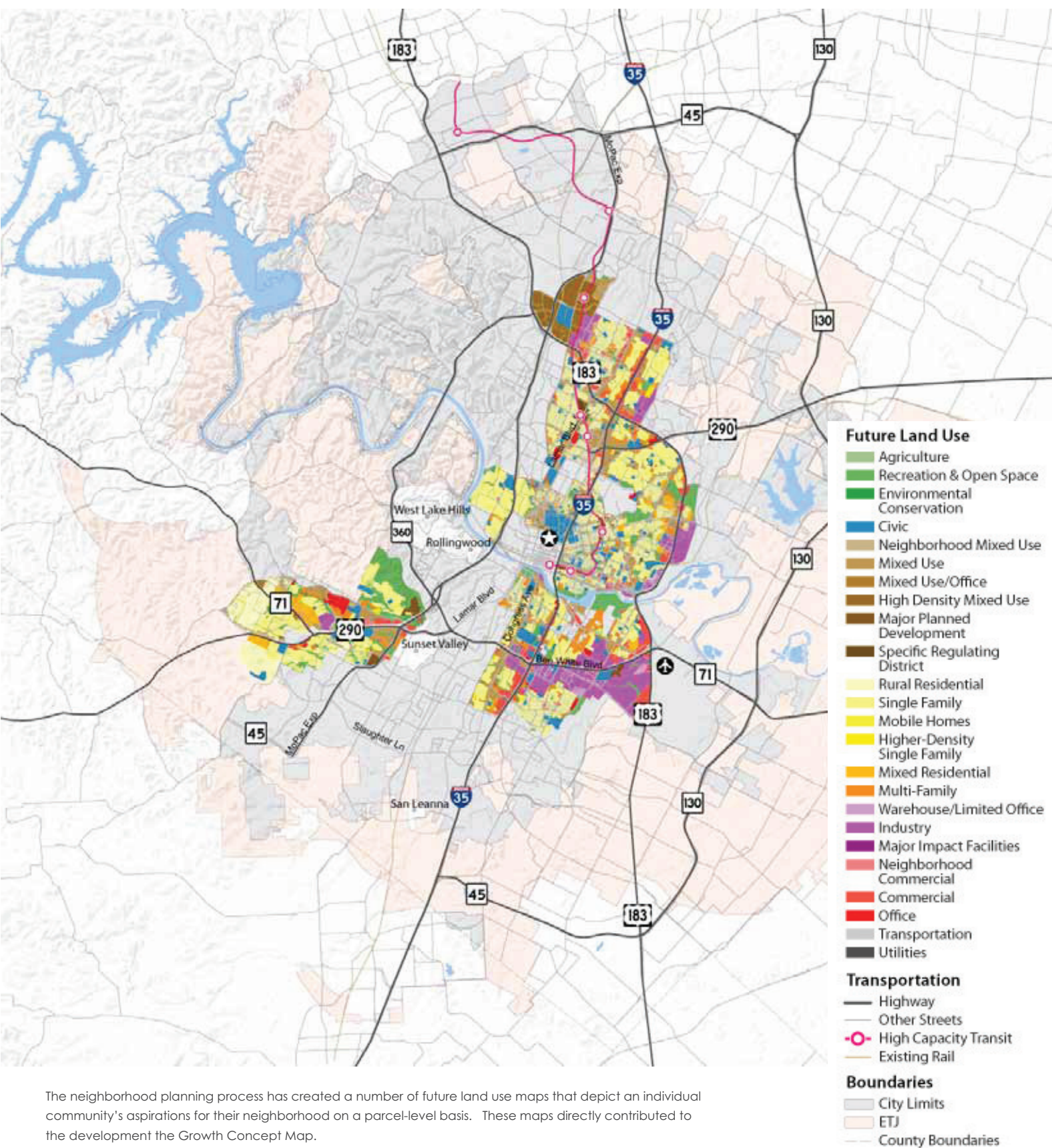
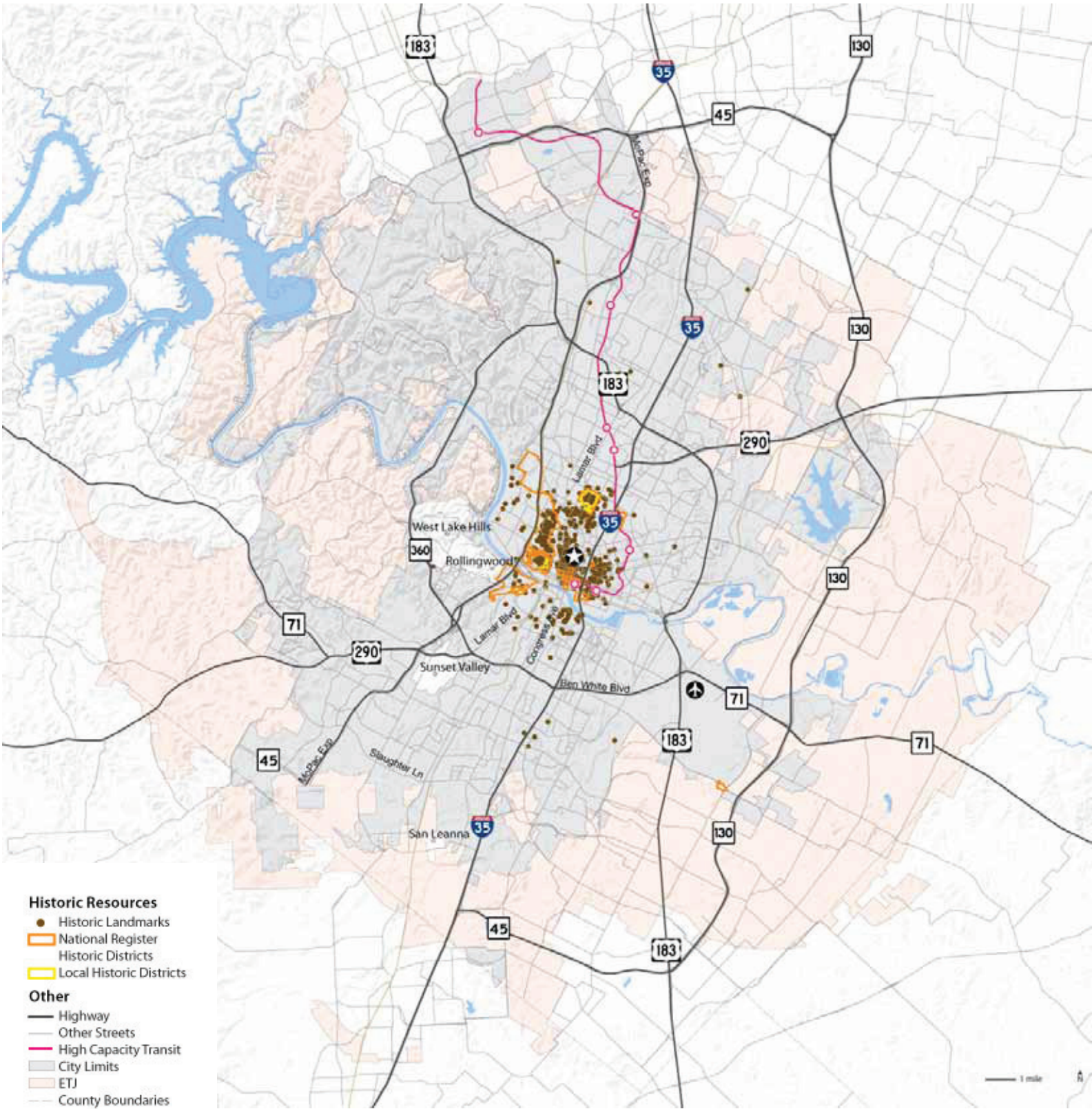


Figure 4.7 **Historic and Cultural Resources**



Mostly clustered in the central city, Austin's designated historic resources include National Register properties and districts, Texas Historic Landmarks, Austin's Historic Landmark designation, and Local Historic Districts.

MIXED USE

Live + Work + Shop + Play

In a complete community, mixed use areas help Austinites conveniently meet a variety of needs in one appealing place. To grow as a livable community, new development should create lively places. It's a traditional idea: People have always been drawn to town centers where they could see neighbors, shop, find work, sell their goods, worship, and visit over a meal or a drink. Historically, small Texas towns developed around a courthouse square. In bigger cities like Austin, corner mom-and-pop stores opened at streetcar or bus stops in the heart of a neighborhood. Hyde Park is a good example; the corner of 42nd Street & Duval continues to thrive as a mixed-use area today, with cafes, shops, and services that make the neighborhood highly attractive, long after streetcar service ceased in the 1940s.

Looking toward the future, we can make more of these special places that keep Austin an interesting place to live. Well-designed mixed-use areas have attractive streetscapes, pockets of greenery and trees, and public spaces. Examples of recent walkable, mixed-use Austin developments that draw people to live, work, shop, and dine in one area include The Triangle, the Second Street District, and the Domain. Emerging projects include the new Market Center at Mueller and the Seaholm District and Project Green downtown.

Case Study: South Congress Avenue Today



With the exception of the iconic Hills Café and the Bel Air Condominiums, the segment of South Congress Avenue south of Ben White Boulevard is largely characterized by narrow or missing sidewalks with numerous driveway entrances, vacant land, used car lots, self-storage facilities, and single-story commercial and industrial buildings separated from the street by parking lots.

Images: Carter Design Associates

Let's Mix It Up!

Well-designed and scaled mixed-use projects and districts are critical. Good urban design is needed to ensure that new mixed-use projects are:

- Inclusive people places
- Walkable and bikeable
- Transit-oriented
- Safe and lively, all day and into the evening
- Compatible with their neighborhood or district
- Inclusive of small, local businesses
- Appealing places with an Austin character
- Sustainable in all aspects

Enjoyable Features

- Sidewalk cafes and other places to meet up
- Smaller, more affordable homes
- Transit stops, sidewalks, bike lanes
- Great people watching and window shopping
- Lunch spots, coffee and happy-hour choices near work

Case Study: South Congress Avenue In The Future

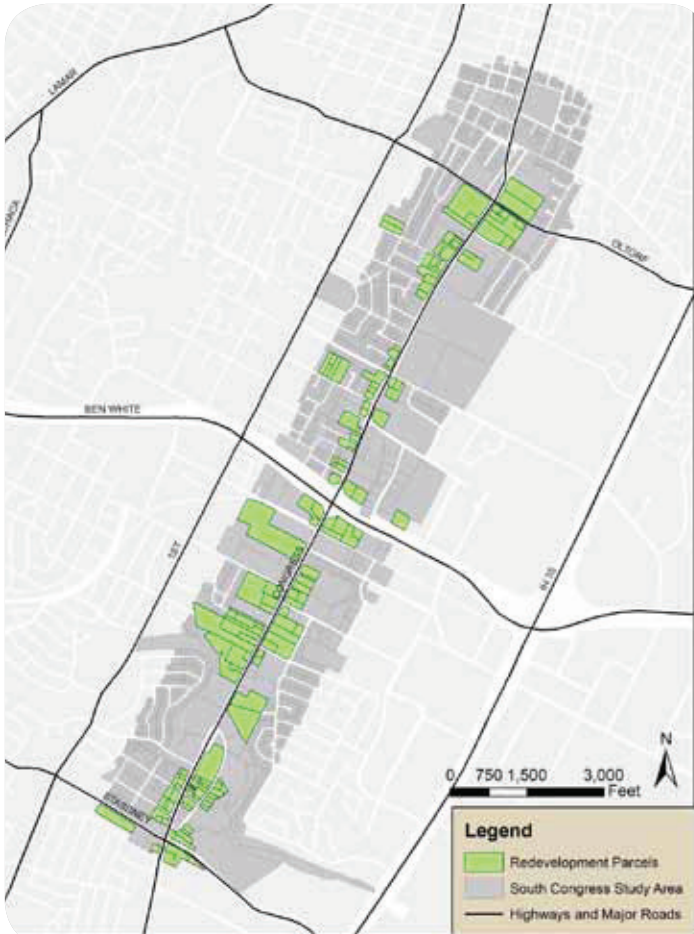
A reimagined South Congress Avenue could become a place where people living in new development and the adjacent neighborhoods can walk and bicycle to local-serving businesses, access high-quality transit to travel throughout the city, and provide new opportunities for people to interact.

COMPACT PLACES

Walkable + Sustainable

Gentler on the environment, compact development creates sociable “activity centers” that contribute to our quality of life. The physical form of our city can be a more sustainable, less car-dependent place in the future. That’s the idea behind the compact, connected centers and corridors that organize the Imagine Austin growth concept map. Concentrating new development in these compact places supports many diverse goals within this comprehensive plan, across all areas of sustainability – for people, prosperity, and the planet.

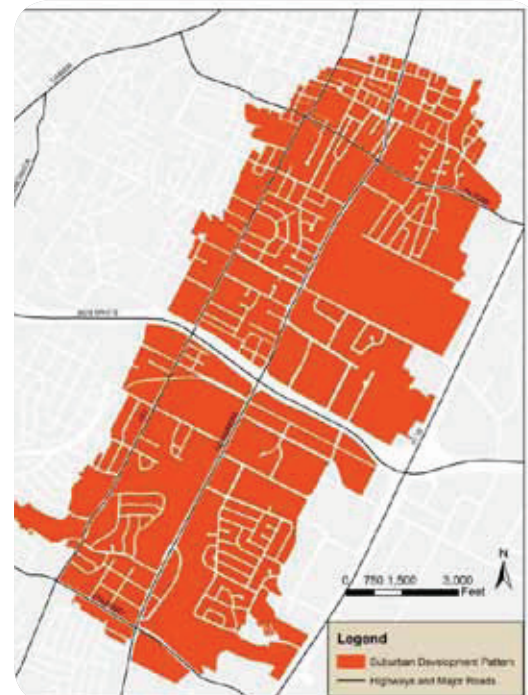
Throughout the Imagine Austin process, Austinites expressed a desire to create and enrich compact local places, where people of all ages, ethnicities and income levels can come together and easily meet their everyday needs and desires.



Mixed Use Compact Scenario

Mixed Use scenario: would allow nearly 15,000 residents on redeveloped multifamily and commercial sites along South Congress Avenue.

Images: AngelouEconomics



Suburban Development Pattern

The same number of people would require nine times as much land under the typical suburban development pattern.

Well-designed compact areas with plenty of people, workplaces, and multi-family homes make transit work; they're needed to make frequent, convenient bus and rail service viable. Transit can run more often, and connect more destinations, when more people live close to bus and rail stops. They're more supportive of seniors, youths, the disabled, and people who prefer not to drive daily.

Why is compact development more sustainable and eco-friendly? It improves air and water quality and reduces driving. Per person, compact urban areas have a lower carbon footprint than suburban areas. More compact development patterns can also lower taxpayer costs for public services, if fewer roads, water and sewer lines, power lines, and other infrastructure is needed to serve far-flung places. Encouraging compact infill projects also reduces development pressures on open space around Austin, helping to support land conservation and environmental protection.

The City completed a study of a section of the **South Congress Avenue Corridor** to better understand the fiscal implications of mixed use, compact development. The study looked at areas more likely to redevelop (based on several assumptions including land values, existing uses, and zoning) and found that compact, mixed use development would result in an increase of over \$9 million in annual sales and use tax revenue. Street reconstruction and water infrastructure costs to accommodate redevelopment were estimated at about \$55 million over several years, or a payback period of 5-6 years. In addition, the study found that a mixed use redevelopment scenario is highly efficient in terms of land consumption. **The same number of new jobs and residents can be accommodated in an approximately 200-acre study area compared with a typical suburban pattern that would require about 2,000 acres of land.**

A **compact community** is one in which housing, services, retail, jobs, entertainment, health care, schools, parks, and other daily needs are within a convenient walk or bicycle ride of one another. A compact community is supported by a complete transportation system, encourages healthier lifestyles and community interaction, and allows for more efficient delivery of public services.

Let's Go Green!

The Imagine Austin scenario planning study compared Austin's current development trends with a more compact, mixed use land use pattern (preferred scenario) to accommodate future population and jobs with the following results:

Land Area Consumed

Trend: 161 square miles

Preferred Scenario: -44 square miles

Mixed use Development

Trend: 45 %

Preferred Scenario: +36%

Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled

Trend: 36.7 million miles

Preferred Scenario: -1.1 million miles

Development in Edwards Aquifer

Trend: 31 square miles

Preferred Scenario: -10 square miles

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Trend: 5.36 million tons

Preferred Scenario: -0.17 million tons

COMPLETE STREETS

Drive + Walk + Ride + Bike

By designing for people, not just cars, we can make our streets and roadway corridors more safe, attractive and welcoming for all. Our streets should work better for all Austinites. The City and its citizens own the roadways and sidewalks – so they need to work for everyone, not just drivers. Complete streets are designed to work well for cars, but also to meet the needs of children walking to school, cyclists, people in wheelchairs trying to catch a bus, rail transit commuters, grandmothers who don't drive, and dads jogging with strollers.

Complete streets support active lifestyles that are better for our health. They allow more people to live car-free and independently. They can also help our economy, spurring private investment and redevelopment.

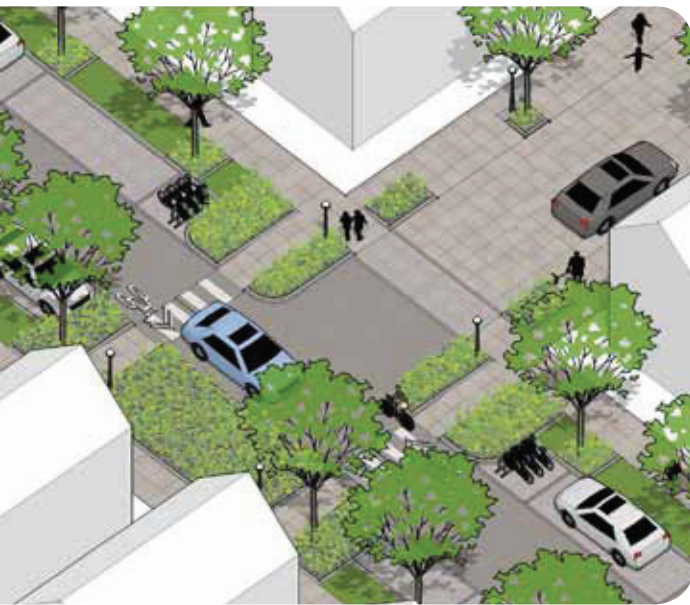
Complete streets are also connected streets. When the street network is a fully connected grid with relatively short blocks, people have many more choices of routes for each trip. This relieves traffic congestion, as people naturally choose the route best for their trip—along a continuum of choices, from most pedestrian-oriented to most auto-oriented streets. In a complete street network, short, local trips can be taken without burdening the big arterial roadways with more cars.



Complete Street Intersection - Mixed use

Images: WRT

The multilane boulevard with a median serves a mix of regional and local traffic as well as important transit routes. These types of streets have a strong pedestrian orientation. Curbed islands may provide transit stops and separate bicycles from vehicles near intersections. A row of street trees provide shade for pedestrians and, along with the row of parking, help insulate them from vehicle traffic.



Complete Street Intersection - Residential

A narrow two-way street for local bicycle and auto traffic. The parking zone and planting zone create a pedestrian friendly street. The connecting alley is a shared space where pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and plantings are all at the same grade; also referred to as “woonerf.” This shared space slows and calms traffic and thus improves pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle safety.

By helping to reduce vehicle miles traveled, complete streets and street networks (linked to a complete regional transportation system) support a sustainable future and imagine Austin's goals for reducing our environmental and carbon footprints.

Successful complete street guidelines, policies, and regulations should achieve and consider the following:

- **Guidelines should be context sensitive.** Guidelines should be adaptable to different areas of Austin and the different scales of neighborhoods and other districts. For example, complete street standards and elements will be different for a downtown street versus a small residential street. The environmental, historic, and cultural context of the local area should also be considered. Guidelines must also reflect plans for future development, including the connected street network described by the growth concept map and small area plans.
- **Establish performance standards.** Complete streets are also about drawing a return on investments, including attracting new development or redevelopment, enhancing mobility for all users, and creating a better environment for users. Tracking data on pedestrian and bicycle counts, measuring building activity, and surveying business owners are examples of ways to measure how a street is performing.
- **Include specific implementation steps.** The implementation of complete streets can occur through regular maintenance and/or major capital improvement projects. Property owners can also contribute to construction of complete streets when redeveloping a site. Guidelines should also consider materials and maintenance issues.
- **Limit places for exclusions.** Not every street can or needs to become a complete street. Exclusions are sometimes necessary, but there should be a high standards for allowing exceptions. For example, specific reasons for not installing sidewalks should be described.

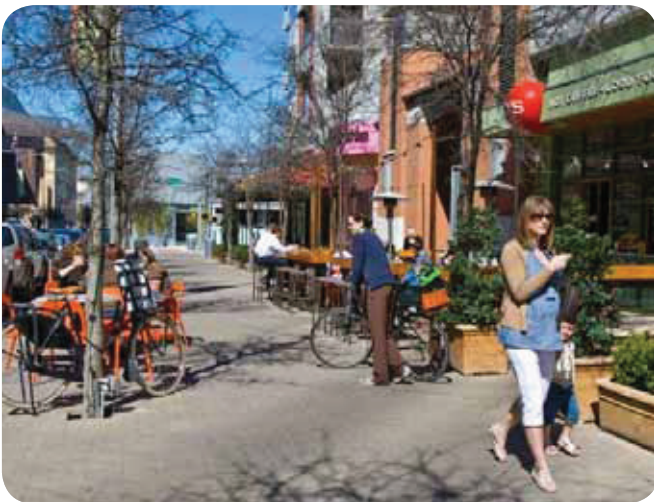
PEOPLE-FRIENDLY PLACES

Active + Fun + Attractive

As Austin becomes more compact, creating special urban places where people love to gather can keep our city livable.

We're all drawn to people-friendly places. We have the opportunity to create more of them as Austin grows – places that are active, accessible, comfortable and sociable. In any city, the places between the buildings need to be designed for people. Great city parks, plazas, trail systems, open-air and farmers markets, streetscapes, waterfronts, gardens, and other public places define a city's attractiveness. Well-designed people-friendly places can beautify our city and its civic realm.

Investments in people-oriented places and parks promote equity; they can be enjoyed equally by city dwellers and visitors of all income levels, ethnicities, and ages. People can live more comfortably in smaller apartments or condos when they have urban parks and other greenspace nearby. We can promote civic pride by creating more great public spaces in Austin. (An example is the City's Great Streets policy for Downtown, which provides people-friendly wide sidewalks, attractive landscaping, and seating.) Placemaking is a powerful economic development tool as well.





The activity centers and corridors in Austin's future will need to be designed as people-friendly places. Austinites can come together to define a common vision for improving or creating a human-scaled place that they care about. The Imagine Austin vision supports development of active, inviting places with unique Austin flavor and character – fun to visit and welcoming for all.

Benefits

- People-friendly public spaces bring people together and help create community.
- Private mixed-use developments that are created using good urban design and "place-making" principles are more desirable, with enhanced value.
- People feel safer in clean, well-populated places with good lighting and amenities
- We're more likely to walk, bike, skateboard or jog in people-friendly places.
- People-friendly places can help make Austin a healthy, sustainable, economically viable city of the future.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

LIVABLE

- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable, Compact, and Walkable Development
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment, Food, and Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

Austin is a city of diverse neighborhoods that contribute to our community's character and our residents' quality of life. While these neighborhoods offer a mix of housing, single-family houses are the most common. The city has lower rates of homeownership than most other Texas cities. In addition, housing affordability is a major issue in Austin. Over the last ten years, median housing costs have risen by 85 percent, while household incomes have remained stagnant or declined. Centrally located neighborhoods in east and south Austin have experienced reinvestment that has also led to increasing housing costs and has resulted in renters and some long-time residents having to move to more affordable neighborhoods. Consistent with other goals in the plan, preserving a wide range of household affordability is essential to preserving the character of neighborhoods.

National demographic trends and housing preferences could significantly impact the local housing market and affect the provision of public and health services. An increasing number of "Generation Y" or "Millennials"—born between 1980 and 1995—are entering the housing market. This group has demonstrated a demand for more urban lifestyles. In addition, the growing number of "Baby Boomers"—born between 1946 and 1964—retiring and downsizing their homes will also affect housing and social service needs.

In 1997, the City initiated the neighborhood planning program to protect, enhance, and ensure the stability of neighborhoods—mostly located in the urban core. Currently, 48 neighborhood planning areas have completed the planning process and have adopted neighborhood plans (see Appendix G). Challenges and opportunities unique to individual neighborhoods are met through the neighborhood planning process.

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Austin's population is projected to almost double over the next 30 years, requiring new and redeveloped housing to accommodate the City's growing population.
- Austin still has strong patterns of racial, ethnic, and income segregation.
- Median housing and transportation costs are higher in Austin than most Texas cities.
- As the housing market has become more expensive, the location of affordable housing units has shifted to increasingly distant suburban areas, leading to more expensive transportation costs.
- Austin is a majority renter city, due in large part to the high number of college students, recent graduates, and an overall younger population.
- Higher housing costs and slower-growing incomes may prompt more families to rent rather than purchase a home.
- High demand for rental units translates into demand for housing types other than single-family detached houses.
- Infill development may be used to meet the growing demand for higher-density, closer-in affordable housing.

Austin must provide a range of energy and resource-efficient housing options and prices in all parts of the City to sustainably meet the housing needs of all segments of our diverse population. In addition, we need to sustain distinct, stable, and attractive neighborhoods that preserve and reinforce the livability, character, and special sense of place in Austin.

Key Challenges for the Future

- Fostering mixed use, mixed-income neighborhoods with a range of housing and transportation choices for our diverse population, community services, facilities, and amenities, in which Austinites can afford to live.
- Maintaining the unique and diverse character of Austin's neighborhoods, while meeting the market demands for close-in housing.
- Balancing new development and redevelopment in lower-income neighborhoods while maintaining the essential character of those neighborhoods.
- Making existing automobile-oriented neighborhoods more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.
- Developing regulations that create better and context-specific transitions between more intense housing, commercial and office uses, and mixed use development and adjacent, established neighborhoods.
- Encouraging the preservation of affordable housing in neighborhoods across the city and in activity centers and corridors.
- Increasing the diversity of housing choices to reflect the needs of all types of households.
- Improving student stability by preserving existing affordable housing and increasing access to new affordable housing.
- Addressing the housing needs for the homeless and those who are about to become homeless.

HOUSING POLICIES

HN P1. Distribute a variety of housing types throughout the City to expand the choices available to meet the financial and lifestyle needs of Austin's diverse population.

(See also LUT P5, S P12)

HN P2. Expand the availability of affordable housing throughout Austin by preserving existing affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons. (See also LUT P10)

HN P3. Increase the availability of affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons, through new and innovative funding mechanisms, such as public/private partnerships. (See also LUT P10, S P4, S P13, C P10)

HN P4. Connect housing to jobs, child care, schools, retail, and other amenities and services needed on a daily basis, by strategies such as:

- directing housing and employment growth to sites appropriate for Transit Oriented Development and
- coordinating and planning for housing near public transportation networks and employment centers to reduce household transportation costs and vehicle miles traveled. (See also LUT P3, LUT P6, LUT P12, S P22, C P9, C P10)

HN P5. Promote a diversity of land uses throughout Austin to allow a variety of housing types including rental and ownership opportunities for singles, families with and without children, seniors, persons with disabilities, and multi-generational families. (See also LUT P5, S P13)

HN P6. Address accessibility issues and other housing barriers to persons with disabilities or special needs.

HN P7. Reuse former brownfields, greyfields and vacant building sites to reduce negative impacts of vacancy and provide new mixed use and/or housing options. (See also LUT P7, E P6)

HN P8. Encourage green practices in housing construction and rehabilitation that support durable, healthy, and energy-efficient homes. (See also CE P11, CFS P22)

HN P9. Renovate the existing housing stock to reduce utility and maintenance costs for owners and occupants, conserve energy, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (See also CFS P22)

BEST PRACTICE: COMMUNITY LAND TRUST | WASHINGTON DC

A Community Land Trust is a private nonprofit corporation created to acquire and hold land for the benefit of a community and provide secure affordable access to land and housing for community residents.

The New Columbia Community Land Trust, Inc. is a community-based land acquisition, housing development, and community education organization. The Land Trust serves as housing development coordinator/consultant to tenant groups seeking to exercise their "first-right-to-purchase" single-family or multi-family buildings when their landlords put them up for sale. In addition to a ground lease, the Land Trust provides tenant organization support, project feasibility, financial packaging and loan applications, architect and contractor selection, construction monitoring, and permanent financing and close-out.

Reference: <http://www.cdsc.org/ncclt/>

**BEST PRACTICE: PRESERVING
AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR
TRANSIT STATIONS | DENVER, COLORADO**

Denver is in the process of a major transit expansion that will usher in new light rail, bus rapid transit, and transit stations. Housing and transportation costs are high in the region and residents are willing to pay more to live close to transit stations, resulting in higher rents and home values. To specifically combat rising housing prices near transit, the City of Denver is working with public/private partners to create a Transit Oriented Development Fund with a goal of building or preserving more than 1,000 affordable units. In a recent success, the redevelopment of South Lincoln Homes (located across from an existing light rail station) will triple the number of affordable units on site and add amenities for residents.

Reference: Reconnecting America: Preserving Affordable Housing Near Transit, Enterprise, 2010; Image Credit: Denver Housing Authority



NEIGHBORHOODS POLICIES

HN P10. Create complete neighborhoods across Austin that have a mix of housing types and land uses, affordable housing and transportation options, and access to healthy food, schools, retail, employment, community services, and parks and recreation options.

(See also LUT P5, CFS P41, CFS P42)

HN P11. Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change and ensuring context sensitive infill in such locations as designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites. (See also LUT P4, LUT P7)

HN P12. Identify and assess the infrastructure needs of older neighborhoods and provide for improvements needed to maintain their sustainability. (See also LUT P30, E P6, CFS P2)

HN P13. Strengthen Austin's neighborhoods by connecting to other neighborhoods, quality schools, parks, environmental features, and other community-serving uses that are accessible by transit, walking, and bicycling. (See also LUT P15)

HN P14. Strengthen planning processes by recognizing that the Comprehensive Plan and small-area plans, such as neighborhood plans, corridor plans, and station area plans, need to respect, inform, and draw from each other.

HN P15. Protect neighborhood character by providing opportunities for existing residents who are struggling with rising housing costs to continue living in their existing neighborhoods. (See also LUT P4)

In 2039, I would like Austin to be “a city with many small neighborhoods, each having a distinct, preserved character, that are affordable.”

Community Forum Series #1 Participant responding to the question “How has the city improved by 2039?”

I would like to see “self sufficient neighborhood sustainability: mixed use throughout neighborhoods (walk to food/produce, daily needs, parks, everywhere).”

Community Forum Series #1 Participant



Agave Neighborhood in East Austin

**BEST PRACTICE: "THE WORLD'S
GREENEST NEIGHBORHOOD":
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AT DOCKSIDE
GREEN | VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Built on the waterfront sites of a former paint factory and shipyard, Dockside Green is a 1.3 million square foot mixed use development project that embodies best practices in sustainable design. At completion, Dockside Green will have approximately 2,500 residents, office and retail space, a central greenway and creek, and a waterfront park. The design promotes walkability and transit use, but its use of "green building" techniques and low impact design are its most notable features. Dockside Green is constructed of renewable, eco-friendly materials, and aims to reduce its energy footprint through an on-site sewage treatment plant and greywater reuse program, an on-site plant that uses local wood waste to generate heat and hot water, wind turbines, solar panels, green roofs, water- and energy-efficient appliances, and real-time unit energy meters that can be adjusted remotely. Other features include bio-retention facilities, pervious paving, and innovative stormwater controls.

Named one of the top ten "green building" projects in 2009, the development has the distinction of achieving the world's highest LEED Platinum scores and becoming the first LEED Neighborhood Development Platinum project.

Reference: <http://www.theatlantic.com>; Image Credit: Jay Scratch, Flickr, Creative Commons License



ECONOMY

LIVABLE

- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable, Compact, and Walkable Development
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment, Food, and Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

Austin's economy has grown substantially over the last twenty years. Between 1990 and 2010, the city's labor force increased by over 50 percent – more than twice the national rate. Despite strong population growth, Austin has maintained relatively low levels of unemployment due to strong business and job creation. Business formation has been particularly strong over the last decade, in part due to the City's entrepreneurial spirit and Texas' business-friendly economic environment. While Austin is home to many large, national and international employers, it is also home to a large number of small and local businesses that contribute both to our economic strength and the cultural vitality of area. In 2008, nearly 72 percent of business establishments in the Austin region had fewer than 10 employees.

Technology, medical, and institutional uses such as higher education and government form the base of Austin's economy. In recent years, the proportion of health care, management, arts, entertainment, and food service jobs have increased. In addition, Austin's technology sector has diversified and job growth is expected in high-tech computer and software employment, medicine and medical research, life sciences, clean energy, creative and technology industries, data centers, and professional services. The percentage of workers with college degrees continues to rise and is significantly higher than the rate for Texas.

As described in core principles for action (Chapter 1), Austin must harness its strong economy to expand opportunity and social equity to all residents. The city must build a vibrant, resilient, and diverse economy that celebrates innovation and creativity, provides equitable opportunities for people, and protects the environment. Sustainability includes not only environmental stewardship and social equity, but also economic prosperity for Austin residents and businesses.

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Between 1990 and 2010, Austin's labor force increased by over 50 percent – more than twice the national rate.
- New retail and office development in surrounding communities is reducing Austin's share of those markets.
- Austin's highly-educated workforce makes the city attractive to high-growth companies seeking to relocate or establish operations in the Austin area.
- Austin continues to create professional and skilled service jobs. However, access to these jobs is limited for many minority groups and individuals with lower educational attainment.
- Austin's creative industries are a key to continued growth.
- Austin's lower wages (relative to other major U.S. cities) creates an impediment to attracting talented workers.
- Entrepreneurship and the ability of existing businesses to adapt to new technologies will continue to drive Austin's economy.
- Austin's natural beauty and climate is critical to the city's attractiveness for business and employees as we compete as a global city.
- Adapting to climate change impacts, such as increased summer temperatures and extended drought, that impose threats to Austin's economic competitiveness.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Sustaining Austin's position as the economic hub of the Central Texas region.
- Ensuring that new employment growth can be accommodated in mixed use centers and corridors and other areas well-served by transit.
- Attracting and developing experienced, higher-level talent in high-growth industries.
- Working with educational institutions and business leaders to expand job training opportunities in areas such as business management, entrepreneurship, and health services to meet expected local industry demands and community needs.
- Creating well-paid jobs in the clean energy industry, particularly in solar manufacturing and installation, energy services provision, and green building.
- Reducing the number of obstacles facing local, small, and creative businesses, such as the availability of physical space for industry and business incubation, affordable commercial rents, education and training, health care, and housing options.
- Preserving small businesses that may be adversely affected by new development.
- Encouraging and supporting the stability and growth of local business to sustain our homegrown business community, including the creative sector.
- Expanding Austin's economic base by positioning the city as a world class medical research and technology center by establishing a medical school and residency programs.
- Increasing the amount of well-paying jobs to allow more people to live and work in Austin in the face of rising costs.
- Preserving Austin's quality of life and expanding its image to more fully embrace its diversity of people, experiences, and opportunities.





FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS PROSPEROUS:

Austin's prosperity exists because of the overall health, vitality, and sustainability of the city as a whole — including the skills, hard work, and qualities of our citizens, the stewardship of our natural resources, and developing conditions that foster both local businesses and large institutions. Development carefully balances the needs of differing land uses with improved transportation to ensure that growth is both fiscally sound and environmentally sustainable.

In 2039, “my grandchildren can remain in Austin with good, well paying jobs.”

Community Forum Series #1
Participant responding to the question “How has the city improved by 2039?”

**BEST PRACTICE: TARGETED
BUSINESS GROWTH | ASHEVILLE, NORTH
CAROLINA**

Greater Asheville, NC established AshevilleHUB as a means to diversify its economy and introduce a new source of employment by focusing attention on the region's economic needs and assets.

Asheville capitalized on its strengths in government, business, academia, and the arts to target climate studies and the growing weather prediction industry, such as global information systems experts, meteorologists, air quality technicians, botanists, and digital media specialists. As a result of this initiative, Asheville is now home to the National Climatic Data Center, the National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center and the Renaissance Computing Institute, the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Research Station, and the Air Force Combat Climatology Center.

In addition to the quality jobs emerging from the climate initiative, the industry has invested in telecommunications infrastructure necessary to process data emanating from high speed satellite feeds securely and reliably.

Reference: <http://www.ashevillehub.com/>

ECONOMIC POLICIES

E P1. Promote and measure business entrepreneurship, innovation and a culture of creativity. (See also C P1)

E P2. Implement policies that create, nurture, and retain small and local businesses and minority- and women-owned business. (See also C P1, C P2)

E P3. Build on the Austin metropolitan area's position as a leader in global trade. (See also C P7)

E P4. Continue to strengthen partnerships among Chambers of Commerce, state and local governments, and major employers and leverage incentives to attract and retain major employers. (See also S P19)

E P5. Enhance Austin's draw as a premier national and international tourist destination by strengthening and diversifying the arts and entertainment offerings, enhancing natural resources, and expanding the availability of family-friendly events and venues. (See also LUT P37, C P1, C P7)

E P6. Support up-to-date infrastructure, flexible policies and programs, and adaptive reuse of buildings so that local, small, and creative businesses thrive and innovate. (See also LUT P8, HN P7, HN P12, C P8, C P15)

E P7. Promote Downtown as the premier business district in the region and expand the presence of global finance and trade. (See also C P7)



Shops along South Congress

E P8. Invest in, construct, and expand major multicultural facilities in Austin's Downtown.

E P9. Establish a medical school and residency programs to spur medical and life science technology investments and meet the region's growing needs for healthcare. (See also S P2)

E P10. Cluster or co-locate high schools, vocational schools, and colleges or universities near employment centers, such as healthcare facilities, biotech and green technology facilities, to better connect students to potential employment opportunities. (See also LUT P13, S P15, S P17)

E P11. Expand educational offerings and establish cooperative partnerships between Austin Community College, the University of Texas, and other institutions of higher learning to retain students and support target industries' education and training requirements. (See also LUT P13, S P15, CFE P17)

E P12. Engage major employers and institutions of higher education to provide leadership in meeting the needs of chronic unemployed and underemployed residents, such as people with disabilities and former clients of the criminal justice or foster care systems. (See also S P15, S P16, S P18)

E P13. Promote "start-up districts" where new businesses benefit from locating near transportation infrastructure, services, suppliers, mentors, and affordable support facilities. (See also C P9)

E P14. Improve regional transportation planning and financing for infrastructure, such as air, airports, rail, and roads, to ensure the reliable movement of goods and people. (See also LUT P2)

E P15. Invest in sustainable, affordable utility sources (communications, power, water, wastewater) to meet the needs of increasing population and employment bases. (See also CFS P2, CFS P21, CFS P24)

E P16. Expand connectivity within the Texas Triangle (Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston) in order to facilitate movement of ideas, goods, and people for economic prosperity. (See also LUT P18, LUT P19, LUT P20)

E P17. Invest in the region's people through long-term job training for living wage jobs. (See also S P15, S P16, S P18)

E P18. Develop a sustainable local food system by encouraging all sectors of the local food economy, including production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery. (See also CE P13, S P6, S P7)

BEST PRACTICE: SMALL BUSINESS / START-UP INCUBATOR | SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

The Santa Fe Business Incubator is a not-for-profit economic development organization and an entrepreneurial leader that provides a supportive environment for growing a business in a wide range of industries. It offers office, lab, and light manufacturing space with affordable short-term leases, plus onsite business workshops and seminars and access to the skill and support of its professional staff and experienced business advisors from the community.

Client companies receive exposure to best practices and enhanced financial networks, leading to faster growth and greater business success. Participants benefit from shared services and facilities, minimizing overhead costs and allowing valuable start-up capital to be used for expansion. Since the Santa Fe Business Incubator opened its doors in 1997, it has helped launch and grow over 70 businesses.

Reference: <http://www.sfbincubator.net/>; Image Credit: Santa Fe Business Incubator



"By promoting local business and encouraging innovation within the city we should strive to remain a highly desirable city."

Community Forum Series #1 Participant



CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT

LIVABLE

- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment, Food, and Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

Austin is “a city that is environmentally healthy, that protects and acknowledges its land’s limits.”

Community Forum Series #1
Participant

As one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S., a major challenge facing Austin and Central Texas is the protection of the region’s environmental resources, particularly its watersheds, waterways, water supply, air quality, open space, and urban tree canopy. These resources perform essential functions and provide vital benefits to the City and its residents. As development continues in or near environmentally sensitive areas, ongoing mitigation, preservation, and conservation efforts will be required.

Austin is located along the Colorado River, where it crosses the Balcones Escarpment, an area notable for its diversity of terrain, soils, habitats, plants, and animals. Austin and the region are known for the Colorado River, the Highland Lakes system, and creeks such as Bull Creek, Barton Creek, and Onion Creek. In addition, Barton Springs, the fourth largest spring in Texas, discharges an average of 27 million gallons of water a day from the Barton Springs Segment of the Edwards Aquifer. The springs feed Barton Springs Pool, one of the most popular and visited natural attractions in Central Texas.

Austin must conserve, protect, and support our natural resource systems by developing and adopting better practices for long-term stewardship of Austin’s environment.

FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE:

Austin is a green city. We are environmentally aware and ensure the long-term health and quality of our community through responsible resource use as citizens at the local, regional, and global level. Growth and infrastructure systems are well-managed to respect the limitations of our natural resources.

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- The Colorado River provides the majority of Austin's water supply. The City has contracts to meet demand at least through 2050.
- The Edwards Aquifer, one of the most important and sensitive aquifers in Texas, feeds a number of springs in Austin, including Barton Springs and its pool. The aquifer underlies approximately 42 percent of the city's land area.
- Austin has a Drinking Water Protection Zone regulation for watersheds that drain to Lake Travis, Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake, and Barton Springs.
- Central Texas is in compliance with all federal air quality standards. However, the region is in danger of exceeding ground-level ozone due to stricter federal standards.
- Farmland in Travis County decreased by 12 percent between 2002 and 2007 due to urbanization and farmland being taken out of production.
- In 2006, Austin's tree canopy cover was estimated at 30 percent of its total land area.
- The City is engaged in several programs to preserve sensitive lands, including purchasing land for water quality protection.
- In 2007, the City passed the Austin Climate Protection Plan resolution, committing the City of Austin to national leadership in the fight against global warming.
- Regional cooperation is needed to more completely implement climate change solutions.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Protecting Austin's watersheds, waterways, and water supply within Central Texas, one of the fastest growing regions in the country.
- Reducing the impact of development in environmentally sensitive watershed areas, particularly in areas affecting Barton Springs and the Edwards Aquifer.
- Improving regional planning and coordination to provide adequate water-related infrastructure and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Reducing the impact of development on creeks and water courses, mostly east of Interstate 35, prone to erosion and characterized by large floodplains.
- Monitoring and increasing Austin's tree canopy as urbanization occurs.
- Slowing the rate of farmland loss and protecting valuable agricultural land from development.
- Balancing growth and protection of our natural resources to create a future that is sustainable.
- Preserving land with sensitive environmental features and plant and animal habitats from development.



Drought conditions

CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

CE P1. Permanently preserve areas of the greatest environmental and agricultural value. (See also CFS P45)

CE P2. Conserve Austin's natural resources systems by limiting development in sensitive environmental areas that including the Edwards Aquifer and its contributing and recharge zones and endangered species habitat. (See also LUT P21, LUT P22, CFS P45)

CE P3. Expand the city's green infrastructure network to include such elements as preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, and agricultural lands. (See also LUT P23, LUT P34, CFS P47)

CE P4. Maintain and increase Austin's urban forest as a key component of the green infrastructure network. (See also LUT P23, LUT P34)

CE P5. Expand regional programs and planning for the purchase of conservation easements and open space for aquifer protection, stream and water quality protection, and wildlife habitat conservation, as well as sustainable agriculture. (See also LUT P2, CFS P45)

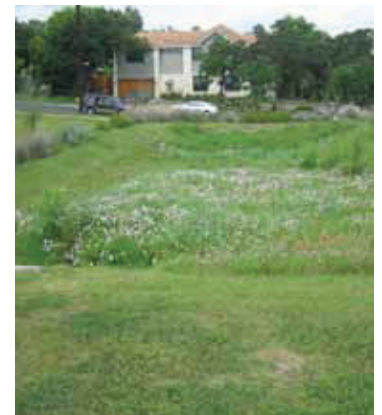
CE P6. Enhance the protection of creeks and floodplains to preserve environmentally and other sensitive areas and improve the quality of water entering the Colorado River through regional planning and improved coordination. (See also LUT P2, CFS P6, CFS P8, CFS P10, CFS P11, CFS P14)

CE P7. Protect and improve the water quality of the city's creeks, lakes, and aquifers for use and the support of aquatic life. (See also CFS P6, CFS P8, CFS P10, CFS P11, CFS P14)

BEST PRACTICE: URBAN FORESTRY | MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Starting in 2004, the far reaching City of Minneapolis Urban Forest Policy coordinates efforts between multiple city departments, other governmental bodies, and the private sector. The purpose of the policy is "to preserve, protect, and improve the health and general welfare of the public by promoting the public benefit of saving, maintaining, and planting trees." This policy is further reflected in the city's comprehensive plan, the Minneapolis Plan, which emphasizes the importance of trees "to the quality of air, water, neighborhoods, and public spaces." The policy directed changes to tree planting and care standards and directed regulatory changes relating to the care and maintenance of trees during construction and development.

Reference: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/grants/canopy/index.htm>



Green infrastructure, such as this drainage pond, retains rain water and reduces run-off, helping to improve groundwater quality, while reducing the need for unsightly concrete culverts and storm sewers.

**BEST PRACTICE: URBAN
AGRICULTURE GREENSGROW
FARMS | PHILADELPHIA,
PENNSYLVANIA**

Greensgrow Farms is located in Philadelphia's New Kensington neighborhood on a previously vacant lot. In the summer of 1998, the owners transformed the former galvanized steel plant and Environmental Protection Agency clean-up site into a three-quarter-acre specialty hydroponic lettuce farm. The business now produces a range of vegetables and flowers and supports a retail center for organic food and live plants. The business is profitable and provides employment opportunities for six seasonal employees and five full-time employees.

Reference: www.greengrow.org
Image Credit: Greensgrow Farms



CE P8. Improve the urban environment by fostering safe use of waterways for public recreation, such as swimming and boating, that maintains the natural and traditional character of waterway and floodplain.

(See also CFS P46)

CE P9. Reduce the carbon footprint of the city and its residents by implementing Austin's Climate Protection Plan and develop strategies to adapt to the projected impacts of climate change.

(See also CFS P5, CFS P9, CFS P22, CFS P23, CFS P34, CFS P38)

CE P10. Improve the air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from motor vehicle use, traffic and congestion, industrial sources, and waste.

(See also LUT P15 - LUT P19, CFS P42, S P3, S P25)

CE P11. Integrate development with the natural environment through green building and site planning practices such as tree preservation and reduced impervious coverage and regulations. Ensure new development provides necessary and adequate infrastructure improvements.

(See also LUT P34, HN P8, CFS P22)

CE P12. Adopt innovative programs, practices, and technologies to increase environmental quality and sustainability and reduce Austin's carbon footprint through the conservation of natural resources.

(See also CFS P9)

CE P13. Incent, develop, and expand the market for local and sustainable food, which includes such activities as farming, ranching, and food processing.

(See also E P18, S P6, S P7)

CE P14. Establish policies that consider the benefits provided by natural ecosystems, such as ecological processes or functions in places such as wetlands and riparian areas that have value to individuals or society.

(See also CFS P16, CFS P17, CFS P19, CFS P20)

CE P15. Reduce the overall disposal of solid waste and increase reuse and recycling to conserve environmental resources.

(See also CFS P15, CFS P18, CFS P20)

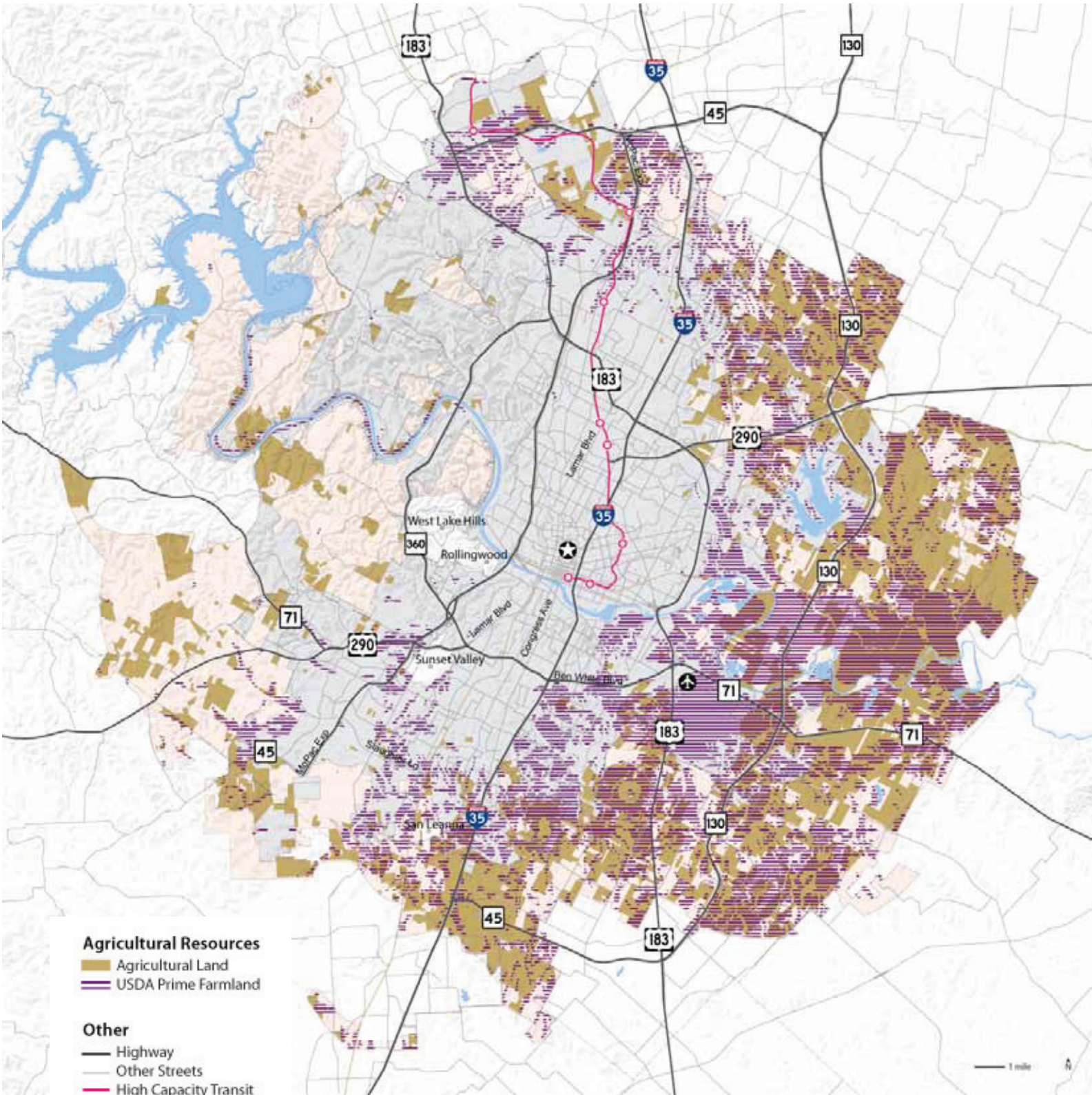
CE P16. Expand and improve regional collaboration and coordination in preserving Central Texas' natural environment.

(See also LUT P2, LUT P23, CFS P48)

"The City in 2039 has made choices that protect the water (aquifer) trees, food, natural resources, land development and the City is living within its means (GREEN!!) in regards to nonrenewable & renewable resources and safeguards sensitive areas for infrastructure or building..."

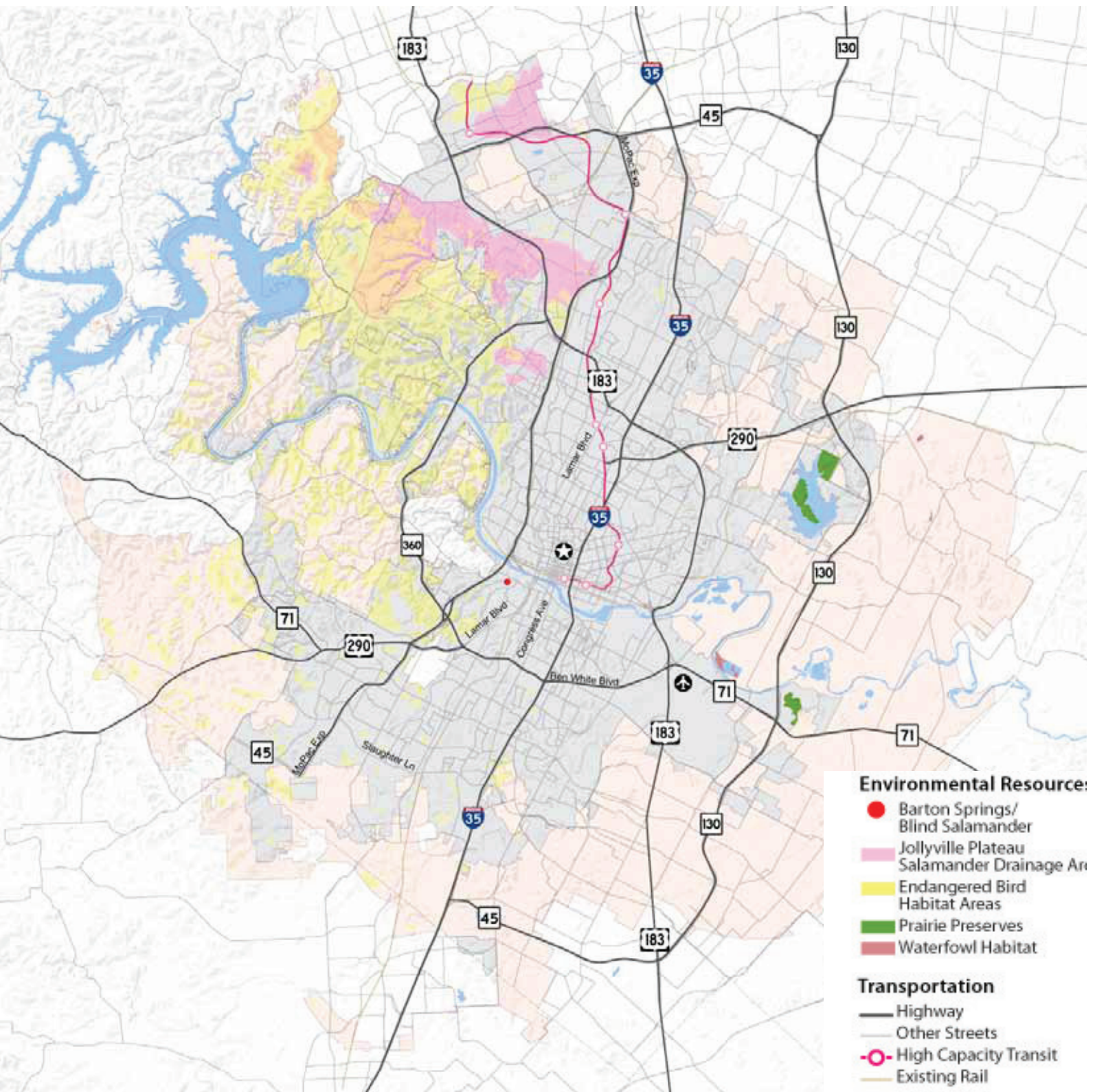
Community Forum Series #1 Participant responding to the question "How has the city improved by 2039?"

Figure 4.8 **Agricultural Resources**



Most of the agricultural lands are located within Austin’s extraterritorial jurisdiction. The agricultural land east of is largely suited for farming, whereas the land to the west is mostly better suited for rangeland.

Figure 4.9 Species Habitats



The majority of species habitat is endangered species habitat located in the environmentally sensitive areas west of the Mopac expressway. The most significant waterfowl habitat is located at the Hornsby Bend Biosolids Management Facility. The most significant prairie preserves are located near the Decker Creek Power Station and Lake Walter E. Long.

Figure 4.10 Tree Canopy and Restoration Areas



Austin's tree canopy in 2011 identifies areas with and without tree coverage. It also identifies sites with potential priority woodlands for preservation.

CITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

LIVABLE

- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment, Food, and Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
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PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

City facilities and services include the infrastructure and services that underlie day-to-day life in Austin. They create and convey many of the necessities of modern life—electricity, transportation, solid waste collection, wastewater, drainage, and drinking water—and help define and shape our city. They also provide public safety, health and other services, and recreational opportunities for Austin's residents.

The City of Austin is comprised of 30 departments and about 12,000 employees that provide direct services to residents and other departments. In addition to typical municipal services (such as police, fire, emergency, parks, libraries, solid waste, and streets), Austin also operates an electric utility (Austin Energy), a water/wastewater utility (Austin Water Utility), the Palmer Events Center, the Neal Kocurek Memorial Austin Convention Center, and the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

Potable Water, Wastewater, Solid Waste, and Drainage

In 2008, Austin Water Utility managed water and wastewater service connections, serving an overall population of approximately 895,000 people. Austin Water's total operating costs for fiscal year 2009 were approximately \$400 million. In addition, Austin Water Utility manages the City's wildlands conservation, water conservation and water reclamation programs and operates the Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend.

Austin Resource Recovery is responsible for citywide litter abatement and collection of discarded materials. In addition to providing weekly garbage and yard trimmings collection services, the City offers bi-weekly curbside recycling to its customers. Austin Resource Recovery's annual operating costs are approximately \$66 million. Its primary source of revenue is residential solid waste collection fees.

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Continued suburban sprawl can strain the City's public safety budget, as more development on the city's fringes will require additional police and fire stations to ensure adequate response times.
- Low-density, suburban development will require costly water and sewer infrastructure extensions.
- Despite having an above-average amount of parkland citywide, many neighborhoods are not within walking distance of a park. The absence of these smaller parks means that many areas of the city are not adequately served by the park system.
- Austin is a regional leader in conservation strategies, but must be proactive in planning for supplying water and other municipal services to its rapidly-growing population.
- More residents and businesses need to recycle to reduce the amount of solid waste deposited in regional landfills.
- The City of Austin's Municipal Climate Action Program requires all departments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from operations and facilities.

Austin Resource Recovery serves approximately 164,000 residential customers, 235,000 anti-litter customers, and 2,600 commercial customers, who account for approximately 25% of all materials discarded in Austin each year.

The Watershed Protection Department is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the municipal storm water conveyance systems for the City. This includes the area's natural water resources, which are a source of community pride, drinking water, recreational opportunities, attractive views, and support for the region's green infrastructure. Watershed Protection maintains more than 900 miles of storm drainpipe, ranging in size from as small as six inches in diameter to the Little Shoal Creek Tunnel, which is a 10-foot concrete arch. In addition to minor channels and ditches, the system includes over 29,000 storm drain inlets, 3,200 manholes, 4,500 outfalls, 9,000 culverts, and 4,000 ditches. This system is intended to efficiently convey stormwater flows to the primary drainage system in Austin—its creeks. When the secondary drainage system is inadequate, localized flooding usually occurs.

Energy

Austin Energy serves 388,000 customers (with a population of more than 900,000), including several communities outside of Austin's city limits. In 2008, it had approximately 2,760 megawatts of generation capacity, including generation from coal, nuclear, natural gas, wind, solar, and landfill methane. From 1982 to 2003, Austin Energy's conservation, efficiency, and load-shifting programs reduced peak demand by 600 MW. Since 2004, the utility has been working on a goal to reduce peak demand by an additional 700 MW by 2020.

Austin Energy maintains over 5,000 miles of overhead primary and secondary power lines, 4,000 miles of underground primary and secondary lines, and 48 substations.

Public Safety

Austin's public safety departments operate as three separate services: police, fire, and emergency medical services (jointly funded by the City of Austin and Travis County). The three services maintain more than 70 stations throughout the Austin and Travis and employ more than 3,700 people.

Public Buildings and Facilities

Municipal functions are distributed across the city, but the majority of the City's administrative functions operate from either City Hall or One Texas Center. Austin's building inventory includes approximately 250 facilities, both owned and leased, such as offices, libraries, recreation centers, fire stations, and service/fleet operating facilities.

The Austin Public Library System has 20 branch libraries, the John Henry Faulk Central Library, and the Austin History Center. Together, Austin Public Libraries received more than 3.2 million visits in 2007-08. Austin libraries provide many residents their primary access to the internet; in 2007-08, 900,000 computer users logged in at a library. In 2006, voters approved bonds for a new 250,000 square foot central library that is scheduled to open in 2014.

Recreation and Open Space

The city has over 35,000 acres of parks and preserves, consisting of metropolitan parks, district parks, neighborhood parks, school parks, pocket parks, greenways, waterways, golf courses, senior activity centers, tennis courts, special parks, and nature preserves. The Austin Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the management of parks, recreational centers, museums, arts and performance spaces, a botanical garden, a nature center, and an urban forestry program. The Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments work together to create an interconnected bicycling, pedestrian, and trails network. Parks, trails, and preserves contribute to the city's green infrastructure network. This network includes the natural resource areas described in the Conservation and Environment building block which includes such areas as wetlands, woodlands, waterways, conservation lands, forests, farms and ranches, and outdoor recreational areas and trails.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Continuing to provide high-quality public services to a city that is expanding through suburban development, annexation, and higher-density redevelopment in the urban core.
- Improving the city's resiliency to address the effects of climate change, including hotter, drier seasons and droughts.
- Expanding our commitment to reducing water use through conservation, reclamation, and drought-management programs while identifying and addressing the effects of doing so on revenue and operating expenses.
- Reducing the volume of stormwater runoff and improving the quality of groundwater infiltration.
- Reducing energy consumption to meet the energy efficiency goals set by Austin Energy and the greenhouse gas reduction goals of the Austin Climate Protection Plan.
- Increasing recycling rates from multi-family, commercial, institutional, industrial, and manufacturing waste generators.
- Developing more local recycling and composting facilities with capacity to handle large volumes of discarded materials.

FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

The City operates with "efficient, clear, predictable planning goals and processes."

Community Forum Series #1
Participant

In 2039, “Austin has expanded public services and is providing libraries, parks, public education and health services to all its residents. There is plenty of affordable housing...”

Community Forum Series #1
Participant responding to the question “How has the city improved by 2039?”

“All government levels (city, regional, state) and organizations coordinate in an efficient manner.”

Community Forum Series #1
Participant

- Adapting to and taking advantage of new technologies in police, fire, and public library services.
- Ensuring public safety facilities have the space and additional land to house staff and equipment in locations that serve existing and new development and minimize response times.
- Providing services to a city with a changing demographic profile. The increase in older and younger Austinites will require additional services oriented to these age groups. The changing ethnic and racial composition of the city will also shift demand for certain services, including an increased need for multilingual communications.
- Providing sufficient funding for maintaining parks and other recreation facilities as the acreage and number of facilities continue to increase.
- Strengthening partnerships between the City of Austin and private organizations, volunteers, and community groups to efficiently provide open space and recreation.
- Preserving environmentally sensitive areas as open space and providing parks within walking distance of all city residents.
- Maintaining existing public infrastructure and facilities such as streets, public buildings, parks, and water, wastewater, and drainage systems, while planning for new investments to accommodate future growth and the community’s desire for new programs and infrastructure.
- Collaborating with Travis, Williamson, and Hays Counties, as well as other partners, to address the challenges identified above.

WASTEWATER, POTABLE WATER, AND DRAINAGE POLICIES

CFS P1. Deliver potable water to Austin’s residents as the population grows and maintain an efficient and sustainable water and drainage system in support of the growth concept map. [\(See also LUT P1\)](#)

CFS P2. Maintain water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure regularly throughout its useful life and replace aged infrastructure as conditions warrant. Continue to ensure safe and reliable service.
[\(See also HN P12, E P15\)](#)

CFS P3. Continue to develop and evaluate decentralized wastewater processing site options, including package plants and satellite facilities, to complement centralized facilities.

CFS P4. Expand efforts to diversify water sources, including through reuse, conservation, and efficiency measures for long-term and reliability planning.

CFS P5. Plan for and adapt to increased drought, severe weather, and other potential impacts of climate change on the water supply. [\(See also CE P9\)](#)

CFS P6. Protect the public water supply and the health and safety of users.

(See also CE P6, CE P7)

CFS P7. Reduce the threats flooding poses to public safety and private property.

CFS P8. Reduce pollution in all creeks from stormwater runoff, overflow, and other non-point sources.⁶ (See also CE P6, CE P7)

CFS P9. Reduce per capita potable water use through conservation, water reclamation, and other water resource stewardship programs. (See also CE P9, CE P12)

CFS P10. Protect and improve the health of Austin's streams, lakes, and aquifers for sustainable uses and the support of aquatic life. (See also CE P6, CE P7)

CFS P11. Protect the health of creeks and prevent public and private property damage by minimizing erosion. (See also CE P6)

CFS P12. Maintain or enhance the existing rate of recharge in the Edward's Aquifer. (See also LUT P21)

CFS P13. Meet or exceed all local, state, and federal permit and regulatory requirements for such processes and programs as Designated Use Support status and the National Flood Insurance Program. (See also CE P6, CE P7, CFS P14)

CFS P14. Integrate erosion, flood, and water quality control measures into all City of Austin capital improvement projects. (See also CE P6, CE P7)

SOLID WASTE POLICIES

CFS P15. Create a regional solid waste management plan that addresses the waste management implications of continued growth in Central Texas. (See also CE P15)

CFS P16. Expand waste diversion rates and services: (See also CE P15)

- o Require recycling at apartment complexes, retail establishments, restaurants, and manufacturers.
- o Increase the types of materials that can be added to curbside collection.
- o Develop more effective recycling practices for construction and demolition debris.
- o Increase composting at homes and businesses.
- o Improve recycling of material and food scraps in public spaces, in trash receptacles on city streets, and at public events.

CFS P17. Divert hazardous waste from landfills and increase participation in recycling hazardous materials by developing programs and practices such as on-call door-to-door hazardous waste collection program. (See also CE P15)

CFS P18. Divert bulk items such as furniture and other household items from landfills and consider ways to recycle or reuse these materials. (See also CE P15)

CFS P19. Improve awareness and participation in the City's recycling programs through traditional and emerging methods such as large-scale media, social marketing campaigns, and presence at public events.

BEST PRACTICE: RECYCLING RATES AND SERVICES | SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

San Jose has a reputation for innovation and leadership in recycling. In 2009, the Solid Waste Association of North America awarded the City its 2009 Recycling System Excellence Award for its efforts in diverting nearly 80 percent of apartment waste from landfills through a processing system that removes recyclables and composts organic materials.

San Jose is also working to reduce the amount of construction waste headed to landfills – which can account for 30 percent of total materials. Under the Construction and Demolition Diversion Deposit program, San Jose collects a mandatory deposit, based on square footage and project type, through building permitting. The deposit is fully refundable with proof that construction and demolition materials are being diverted from landfills. Materials can be taken to a certified facility for recycling, re-use, or donation.

Reference: www.recycletogether.com, <http://www.sjrecycles.org/construction-demolition/cddd.asp>



Reclaimed Water Sign.

BEST PRACTICE: FOSTERING SAFE COMMUNITIES CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION | HOUSTON, TX

One of the goals of the Go-Neighborhoods program of Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Houston is to support healthy neighborhood development through livable and safe environments. GO Neighborhood safety team members instructed over forty neighborhood leaders about best practices and principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. The principles are part of LISC's SafeGrowth training and certification program for community leaders.

The new trainees will analyze problem areas using a safety audit form and work with police, civic organizations, community residents, and property owners to begin applying these principles (such as lighting, access control, "eyes on the street") in their neighborhoods.

Reference: www.go-neighborhoods.org
www.lisc.org



The Twin Oaks Library in the Bouldin neighborhood.

CFS P20. Continue to work with the Texas Product Stewardship Council and others to advocate for statewide "extended producer responsibility" initiatives that require manufacturers and retailers to stop using "hard to recycle" and/or toxic products. (See also CE P15)

ENERGY POLICIES

CFS P21. Support the growth concept map and provide affordable, reliable electricity to Austin's residents and businesses.

(See also LUT P1, E P15)

CFS P22. Reduce per capita energy use through conservation and improvements that make buildings more energy efficient.

(See also HN P8, HN P9, CE P9, CE P11)

CFS P23. Reduce peak energy demand and total electric generation capacity that Austin Energy needs to maintain by encouraging users to use electricity during off-peak hours. (See also CE P9, CE P11)

CFS P24. Increase the share of renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, and biomass, used by Austin Energy to generate electricity, including infrastructure for on-site sources throughout the city.

(See also HN P8, E P15, CE P9)

PUBLIC SAFETY POLICIES

CFS P25. Reduce crime rates, thereby improving the perceived and actual safety in neighborhoods across Austin.

CFS P26. Incorporate community outreach and involvement in public safety in order to build trust between the police force and Austin's minority communities.

(See also S P5)

CFS P27. Provide public safety services to newly annexed areas and areas with increased activity, such as new neighborhoods, redevelopment areas, transportation corridors, and activity centers.

CFS P28. Provide preventive safety education (fire, police, and emergency services) to Austin residents, with particular attention paid to those individuals who speak little or no English.

CFS P29. Increase the use of joint or shared facilities between public safety and other city service providers, when possible, to provide residents with efficient services, reduce costs, and maintain public safety infrastructure. (See also S P28)

CFS P30. Improve collaboration between public safety providers and city planners to incorporate best development practices to reduce crime by such means as improved lighting, density, better designed neighborhood ingress and egress, and putting more "eyes on the street." (See also LUT P30)

CFS P31. Collaborate and coordinate with other public safety agencies at the county, state, and federal levels to share resources and address the increasingly regional nature of crime.

CFS P32. Maintain quality standards in recruiting and training new public safety officers, and strive for a public safety workforce that reflects Austin's changing demographics.

CFS P33. Continue to improve education and training of public safety employees and build new skills in using technology to improve public safety.

PUBLIC BUILDING POLICIES

CFS P34. Improve access to neighborhood libraries to promote the establishment of Complete Communities throughout Austin. (See also S P3)

CFS P35. Distribute public buildings where neighborhood services are located and other accessible locations throughout the city. (See also S P14)

CFS P36. Improve multi-modal public transportation access to the City's public buildings and facilities, including the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

CFS P37. Integrate public buildings and facilities into active, walkable, mixed use neighborhoods and complete, healthy communities. (See also LUT P5, S P3)

CFS P38. Reduce energy consumption and waste generation in all public buildings to meet the City's greenhouse gas reduction and Zero Waste goals. (See also CE P9)

CFS P39. Develop public buildings and facilities that create healthy work environments and educate the public about energy-efficient, sustainable building, and green-ing best practices.

CFS P40. Serve Austin's diverse, growing population and provide family-friendly amenities throughout the city by developing new parks and maintaining and upgrading existing parks. (See also LUT P5, LUT P29, LUT P32, S P3)

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE POLICIES

CFS P41. Ensure and increase equitable access to and opportunities for arts, recreation, and leisure activities for all ages throughout the City. (See also LUT P29, LUT P32, HN P10, C P14)

CFS P42. Increase connectivity between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to parks and greenways through the use of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, multi-use paths, and trails. (See also LUT P15, HN P10)

CFS P43. Maximize the role of parks and recreation in promoting healthy communities and lifestyles. (See also S P3)

CFS P44. Feature superior design in parks and recreational facilities and include opportunities for public art and green and sustainable design solutions. (See also LUT P35, C P16, C P17)

CFS P45. Expand the amount of permanently protected natural and environmentally sensitive areas for use as open space and passive recreational areas. (See also CE P1, CE P2, CE P5)

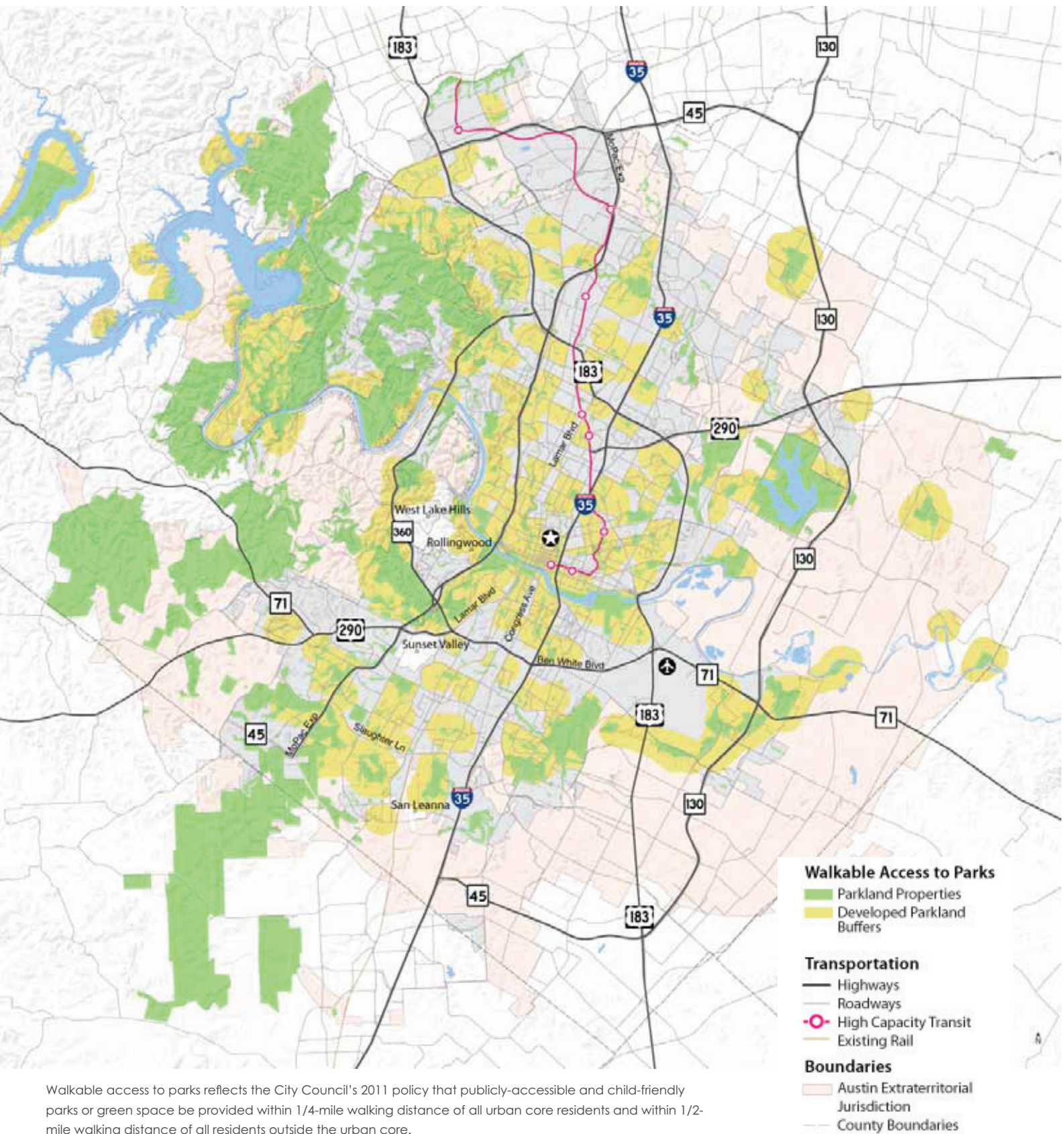
CFS P46. Foster the use of creeks and lakes for public recreation and enjoyment in a manner that maintains their natural character. (See also CE P8)

BEST PRACTICE: JOINT USE FACILITIES

Many local governments have entered into agreements with their school districts for joint use of educational facilities. Under these agreements, a school property functions as an educational facility during the day and a community facility during non-school hours. Joint use is particularly valuable in the current economy, as many local governments have limited funds for new capital expenditures. Shared facilities reduce the costs of land acquisition, construction, maintenance, and operation, and may allow a community to better meet the infrastructure demands of new development. Joint use agreements typically allow the public to use a school's playing fields and gymnasium, but many jurisdictions have agreements that enable sharing of multipurpose rooms and classrooms, cafeterias, computer/media centers, libraries, auditoriums, pools, and stadiums (this often happens when a new school is constructed with the intent of using it for educational and community purposes). Shared parking may be included to prevent community users from parking along nearby neighborhood streets or to add parking spaces to an urban neighborhood. Joint use transforms the school into a true community center that serves a wide range of users while minimizing costs.

Joint use agreements must be authorized by state law. Section 11.165 of the Texas Education Code permits school districts to allow after hours use of school facilities for libraries, tutoring, and recreational purposes.

Figure 4.11 Park Service Area Analysis



Walkable access to parks reflects the City Council's 2011 policy that publicly-accessible and child-friendly parks or green space be provided within 1/4-mile walking distance of all urban core residents and within 1/2-mile walking distance of all residents outside the urban core.

CFS P47. Extend existing trail and greenway projects to create an interconnected green infrastructure network that include such elements as preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands that link all parts of Austin and connect Austin to nearby cities.

(See also LUT P23, LUT P34, CE P3)

CFS P48. Maintain existing partnerships and develop new relationships among City of Austin departments, regional governments, other governments, community organizations, and volunteers to support recreational services and achieve higher levels of service. (See also CE P16)



Bicyclists ride over Lady Bird Lake on the Pfluger Bridge, which connects with the Lance Armstrong Bikeway.



Bicyclists and joggers pass the statue of Austin icon Stevie Ray Vaughn on the hike and bike trail.



Joggers and cyclist along the Trail at Lady Bird Lake

SOCIETY

Complete Community Matrix

LIVABLE

- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment, Food, and Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

A community's overall health is affected by the quality of the built and natural environment, as well as the services available. The built environment refers to the human-made surroundings—roads, neighborhoods, parks, and buildings that define the physical form of a city. The natural environment refers to resources such as air, water, soil, and flora and fauna. Built and natural environments that promote health and well-being place fewer demands on public health services. Promoting community-wide health and wellness, safety, disease prevention, and mitigation of potential environmental hazards and disasters are all components of a healthy community. Accessibility to quality educational options promotes a sustainable community by preparing residents prepared for a changing world and economy.

The ongoing national discussion about childhood and adult obesity and their associated illnesses—diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease—indicates the need to address healthy communities on all fronts. Addressing the design of cities and their neighborhoods, corridors, and centers is crucial in laying the groundwork for creating healthy communities.

As Austin becomes more diverse, so do its families. There are large and small ones; there are married and non-married couples who may or may not have children; some families may have only one parent and others may have extended families living under a single roof; some heads of families are gay or lesbian and may or may not have children; as well as a range of other family types. Regardless of their composition, families need access to services, healthy food, transportation choices, healthy housing, family- and children-friendly activities, and a safe environment. Healthy children and families are essential for a strong and resilient community.

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Health care access in Austin is slightly better than the U.S. average, but below what would be considered optimal. The percentage of Travis County residents with health insurance is decreasing and lower income families are less likely to be covered.
- As of 2009, all Central Texas counties were classified as “medically underserved” by the US Department of Health and Human Services.
- The Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project found that nearly all clusters of middle school students who are obese are located in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in northern, eastern, and southern parts of the city.
- According to the Austin Independent School District, in the 2008-2009 school year, less than 65 percent of students had healthy body mass index — a ratio of a person's height and weight often used as a health indicator.
- Long term trends showing significant increases in diabetes rates will place a strain on delivery of health services.
- Currently, Austinites aged 45 and over are making the largest gains in population. Services specific to an aging population will increase as this group ages.
- Access to healthy foods is limited in some neighborhoods. Proximity and cost can both be limiting factors for access, particularly in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- As housing becomes more expensive in Austin, some families are seeking homes outside of the city and farther from jobs – resulting in increased transportation costs and travel times.

Austin is a highly educated city with a large portion of the population having advanced degrees. However, there are populations and parts of the city that lag behind in education. To ensure that all Austinites can take part in the future envisioned by Imagine Austin, more educational opportunities are needed. Education goes beyond basic primary, secondary, and university education; it also includes quality education and day care from birth, continuing education throughout life, and job skills training .

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Ensuring that health care providers continue to meet the needs of the changing population, including seniors and the disabled.
- Providing accessible preventive and basic health care and services for all residents, including the economically disadvantaged, uninsured, and underinsured.
- Becoming a leader in health care research and technology.
- Improving access to services for those struggling with drug and alcohol abuse.
- Providing reliable access to housing and quality childcare for low- and middle-income families.
- Increasing access to programs to enhance birth to age 5 development, quality pre-kindergarten options to make sure children are prepared to begin primary education and providing high-quality education and services to all residents of Austin.
- Ending homelessness with supportive housing, mental health services, counseling, and alcohol and drug treatment.
- Increasing accessibility and affordability of healthy lifestyle choices for low-income families and residents.
- Raising childhood fitness levels to help stem the tide of childhood health problems such as obesity and asthma.
- Ensuring that neighborhood streets are both safe and widely perceived to be safe to encourage children to play outside and encourage more outdoor activities by residents.
- Protecting the population from hazardous substances and pollution.
- Preparing high school, vocational school, and college graduates to enter the work force at a competitive level.
- Improving access to job resources and training to improve ability to find jobs paying a living wage.

- Using schools as community centers and places for lifelong learning, including activities such as parenting classes, early childhood learning, tutoring, adult education, libraries, and technology education.
- Reducing high-school and college drop-out rates.
- Reducing the incidence of teen pregnancy through expanded education programs and assisting those teens who do get pregnant with better access to prenatal health-care, programs to keep them in school, and job training.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE POLICIES

S P1. Provide access to primary, preventive health, trauma, specialty care, and urgent care.

S P2. Attract and retain high-quality health service providers (including doctors, dentists, specialists, medical technicians, and nurses) and promote the development and expansion of medical education opportunities. (See also E P9)

S P3. Encourage more active lifestyles through new and redevelopment that supports walking and bicycling. Locate retail, services, and public facilities such as parks, health services, and libraries in or near neighborhoods to reduce traffic congestion and contribute to an improved sense of community.

(See also LUT P3, LUT P5, LUT P32, LUT P36, HN P4, CFS P34, CFS P40, CFS P43)

S P4. Reduce homelessness through long-term supportive housing, mental health services, counseling, and alcohol and drug treatment. (See also HN P3)

S P5. Develop close relationships between public safety personnel and neighborhoods to promote cooperation and safety. (See also CFS P26)

S P6. Promote the availability of and educate the community about healthy food choices, including “slow food” (local food traditions, small-scale food processing, and organic agriculture) and nutritional education programs. (See also E P18, CE P13)

S P7. Provide broad access to fresh foods, local farmers markets, co-ops, grocery stores, community gardens, and healthy restaurants in neighborhoods. (See also E P18, CE P13)

S P8. Improve educational opportunities for marginalized populations and provide better services for at-risk segments of our community.

S P9. Develop and promote tobacco cessation programs and regulations to support tobacco-free environments.

S P10. Reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy and address the associated social and health concerns.

BEST PRACTICE: CENTRAL TEXAS SUSTAINABLE FOOD CENTER

Formed in 1975, the Sustainable Food Center supports improved access to locally grown food, community health, and sustainable farming practices. The center connects farmers with local households through farmers markets, hospitals, universities, schools, and worksites to improve access to nutritious, affordable food and support agricultural viability. The center also plays a major role in education and community health through The Happy Kitchen program and its relationships with regional school districts, school health advisory councils, PTA organizations, and foundations.

Reference: www.sustainablefoodcenter.org



The Alamo Community Garden in the Blackland neighborhood.

BEST PRACTICE: TANDEM TEEN PRENATAL AND PARENTING PROGRAM | AUSTIN, TEXAS

Begun in 1998, the Tandem Teen Prenatal and Parenting Program is an interagency collaboration, led by People's Community Clinic. It provides medical, mental health, educational and vocational services, and social support to pregnant and parenting teens. The program aims to improve the health and well-being of teen mothers and their children and to reduce the incidence of additional pregnancies for these young women. The program addresses the medical, educational, and psychosocial needs of young parents during pregnancy and through the first three years of their baby's life. By partnering with Any Baby Can, Austin Child Guidance Center, and LifeWorks, the program offers a comprehensive array of services to young parents including intensive case management, mental health services, medical and prenatal care, child development, family planning, and parenting education. Over 90 percent of participants have accessed ongoing healthcare for themselves and their children, including annual exams, well-child checks, sick care, and up-to-date immunizations.

Reference: <http://www.austinpcc.org/special-programs/tandem/>



The Green Classroom at Becker Elementary, a organic garden that provides students a hands-on opportunity to learn about ecology and healthy food.

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND EDUCATION POLICIES

S P11. Develop public transportation options that link all areas of the City, are affordable to economically disadvantaged groups, and provide access to job opportunities and services. (See also LUT P7)

S P12. Increase the variety of housing options (such as the types of housing and number of bedrooms) to meet the needs of family and non-traditional households including households with children.

(See also LUT P5, HN P1)

S P13. Provide opportunities for seniors and other persons to live in affordable housing that meets their specific needs and in neighborhoods that allow them to safely travel to and access their daily needs.

(See also HN P3, HN P5)

S P14. Locate emergency services within close proximity to all neighborhoods and continue to improve community outreach and relationships between police and neighbors. (See also CFS P26, CFS P29)

S P15. Collaborate with educational partners to increase access to educational opportunities for higher education, technical education, and vocational training in Austin area public schools, colleges, universities, and other educational facilities. Match job training with current and expected employment needs for existing and emerging "target industries."

(See also E P10, E P11, E P12, E P17)

S P16. Increase the availability of continuing education. (See also E P12, E P17)

S P17. Work with the school districts on planning for long-range student population growth from kindergarten through high school. Encourage school district support of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan in securing new educational facilities and maintaining existing facilities.

(See also LUT P13, E P10)

S P18. Improve educational opportunities for marginalized populations. (See also E P12, E P17)

S P19. Coordinate with educational and business partners to increase the availability of quality early education, child care, after school, and preschool programs for all residents, especially low and middle income households and families with children with disabilities. (See also LUT P13, E P4)

S P20. Enact land use and other planning policies that enhance the quality of life for families with children and promote family-friendly neighborhoods and services.

S P21. Increase dense, compact family-friendly housing in the urban core by creating standards and guidelines that encourage private interests to create more family-friendly development.

(See also LUT P5)

In 2039, Austin is "Community strength. Families, trust, safety, shared spaces highly valued, community centers, community gardens."

Community Forum Series #1 Participant responding to the question "How has the city improved by 2039?"



BEST PRACTICE: CAPITAL IDEA | AUSTIN, TEXAS

Capital IDEA helps low income adults wanting a career but unable to pay for the necessary training. The program works with local employers to identify expanding job sectors that pay a living wage. Once the training and education level needed for these careers are identified, they are added to the Sponsored Career List. This list includes jobs in the healthcare, high-tech, and professional trade fields. Capital IDEA awards sponsorship for educational training up to an associate degree in several career fields.

Low income adults in Central Texas meeting certain qualifications can apply to become a sponsored participant. If accepted into the program, Capital IDEA will identify the training steps needed for each person to achieve their career goals. Capital IDEA will pay the full cost of the participant's education through graduation. This includes the cost for tuition, academic fees, and books. Additionally, the program offers placement assistance, emergency assistance, and for participants with children the program helps with childcare expenses.

Reference: <http://www.capitalidea.org/>

S P22. Improve access to quality child care services near homes and workplaces.

(See also HN P4)

S P23. Partner with local school districts to transform school yards into multi-use recreational and exercise facilities, with such amenities as playgrounds, athletic courts and fields, walking/running tracks, and swimming pools. (See also LUT P13)

S P24. Partner with local school districts, non-profits, and civic groups to expand after school and summer programs for children of all ages and abilities.

(See also CE P19)

S P25. Increase sidewalks and bicycle lanes in neighborhoods to create safer routes to schools, parks, and transit stops.

(See also LUT P14, LUT P15)

S P26. Ensure that Austin children in every part of town have access to an excellent education.

S P27. Partner with Austin-area school districts to enhance policies and practices that support neighborhood-based schools.

S P28. Collaborate with school districts and public and private entities to create joint-use partnerships at existing and new public school campuses.

(See also LUT P13, CFS P29)

S P29. Create public spaces that attract and engage children and serve as gathering places for children and families.

(See also LUT P5, LUT P29)

“Increase community awareness to keep our neighborhoods, police, Neighborhood Associations intact; safe...educated city with opportunities for all citizens to improve their lives...”

Community Forum Series #1 Participant



CREATIVITY

LIVABLE

- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity and Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment, Food, and Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

Austin's creativity is expressed through the arts, music, dance, film, food, design, gaming, architecture, cultural traditions and history, and a variety of print and electronic media. A young, diverse city with a tradition of attracting creative individuals, Austin has a national reputation for its artistic and welcoming culture. It is routinely ranked as one of the "Best Of" cities in the country based on a high percentage of its workforce in creative jobs, a relatively low cost of living (especially when compared to the East and West Coasts), and healthy employment and salary growth.

The Cultural Arts Division within the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office, oversees the City's cultural arts programs and the development of arts and creative industries as a part of Austin's overall economic development strategy. Programs include Art in Public Places, community based arts development, assistance for the music, film and creative industries, and initiatives designed to support and encourage Austin's creative identity and vitality. The History, Arts and Nature Division of the Parks and Recreation Department provides artistic, cultural and historical opportunities for the public at its museums, theaters, and arts centers. They provide exhibits, classes, programs, and low-cost or free use of their facilities which supports a lifelong learning in the arts and helps incubate local arts.

Arts, culture, and creativity are highly valued in Austin. Following a two-year planning effort, the City adopted the CreateAustin Cultural Master Plan in 2010. In addition to refining the City's roles and responsibilities for cultural support and identifying strategies for both the City and the community to implement, the planning process sparked partnerships between community leaders and the City. Austin must support and value the city's arts and creative sectors as vital contributors to the city's identity, economy, and quality of life.

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Austin's arts and entertainment scene is a cornerstone of the city's identity.
- Arts and entertainment are also important elements of the city's economy and can be leveraged for additional economic growth.
- City and private funding for local arts facilities and programs is critical to the ongoing strength of the arts in Austin.
- Lower-income and minority communities may not have adequate opportunities to participate in Austin's arts programs and events.
- Access to affordable art studio and performance space needs to be maintained.
- Workforce development programs should include job training for technological, arts-related occupations.



Chuy's Children Giving to Children Parade

FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS CREATIVE:

Creativity is the engine of Austin's prosperity. Arts, culture, and creativity are essential keys to the city's unique and distinctive identity and are valued as vital contributors to our community's character, quality of life, and economy.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Providing affordable, accessible, and functional studio, performance, rehearsal, and office spaces for small organizations and individual artists.
- Ensuring that affordable residential units and transportation options are available for artists as housing costs and land values in the urban core rise.
- Improving awareness and visibility of the City of Austin's many public art projects and its broad range of cultural resources, including museums and art centers.
- Providing ongoing funding for community arts programs.
- Maintaining a strong commitment to cultural and arts programs in schools and communities, and ensuring that all residents have equal access to these programs.
- Increasing the role of arts and creativity in strengthening Austin's multicultural identity.
- Integrating arts and performance facilities and activities with downtown development in a way that is true to Austin's identity.
- Managing conflicts between live music and a growing urban population.

CREATIVITY POLICIES

C P1. Continue to grow artists, micro-enterprises, and small arts organizations as businesses, and support iconic cultural institutions to sustain and grow Austin's economic and cultural vitality.

(See also E P1, E P2, E P5)

C P2. Increase and enhance coordination, resource sharing, and partnerships among artist and creative individuals, organizations, institutions, and businesses.

(See also E P2)

C P3. Increase philanthropic, public, and resident support and participation in artistic and creative activities in Austin.

C P4. Continue to sustain and grow Austin's successful live music scene, festivals, theater, film and digital media, and other creative offerings.

C P5. Continue to explore and identify solutions to support live music venues while addressing sound abatement issues.

C P6. Encourage new or existing art forms, new approaches to the creation or presentation of art, or new ways of engaging the public, including children, with art.

C P7. Grow Austin's regional and global cultural efforts in order to stimulate trade and bring new resources to the community. (See also E P3, E P5, E P7)

C P8. Expand access to affordable and functional studio, exhibition, performance, and office space for arts organizations, artists, and creative industry businesses.

We will be
 “A city that retains the character of Austin of today, yesterday, years ago, and tomorrow - so that there is a thread/sense/pride of place now and for years to come. Blend of old and new, keep our neighborhoods, police, Neighborhood Associations intact...”

Community Forum Series #1
 Participant



Musician on South Congress

BEST PRACTICE: ARTSPACE | MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

ARTSPACE was established in 1979 to serve as an advocate for artists' space needs and over the years, has pioneered ways to build better communities through the arts by leveraging transformative social change. Today, ARTSPACE is now a national leader in the field of developing affordable spaces – more than 30 to date! – that not only meet artists' needs but helps to create a synergy that increases collaborations, networking, sharing of equipment, resources, skills, and livelihood. Additionally, these developments anchor arts districts and expand public access to the arts. They also spur economic development in the neighborhoods and regions they reside in through attracting additional artists, arts businesses, organizations, and supporting non-arts businesses to the area.

Reference: <http://www.artspace.org/>



Arachnophilla, a sculpture by Texas artist Dixie Friend Gay. The 23-foot tall sculpture straddles a walking and bike path in the Mueller development.

C P9. Encourage artists and other creative individuals by promoting the creation of live/work spaces and creative industry hubs, districts, and clusters as retail, community, or neighborhood anchors and activity generators to attract and support other economic and community enterprises. (See also LUT P3, HN P4, E P3)

C P10. Improve access to affordable living to include housing, healthcare, and effective transportation in order to develop and retain Austin's creative organizations, industries, and individuals. (See also HN P3, HN P4)

C P11. Encourage creativity, imagination, and arts-based education in schools and neighborhoods throughout Austin to sustain Austin's "culture of creativity" as a fundamental facet of Austin's spirit and mindset.

C P12. Construct, sustain, and grow Austin's multicultural and artistic heritage from African American, Hispanic, Asian, and other ethnic and culturally-specific groups as the city develops and grows. (See also LUT P38)

C P13. Create avenues for cultural variety and provide the opportunity for all groups to benefit from the different cultures present in Austin. (See also LUT P38)

C P14. Encourage grassroots, neighborhood-based organizations and activities that promote art, imagination, and creativity to enhance the role the arts play in community life. (See also LUT P5)

C P15. Maximize the recognition and participation of arts and creativity as part of Austin's "Creative Economy."

C P16. Increase the availability of significant public art to designate districts and/or their entrances and to assist visitors in navigating the area. (See also LUT P35, CFS P44)

C P17. Define Austin's sense of place through high standards for architecture and urban design, public art, public spaces and parks, and arts education. (See also LUT P11, LUT P31, CFS P44)

C P18. Explore existing city policies, processes, and regulations regarding the arts to determine what changes can be made to coordinate these with other goals such as historic preservation, affordable housing, and high-density development. (See also LUT P42)

C P19. Collaborate with area school districts, local businesses, and arts organizations in developing programs that encourage lifelong active engagement and participation in the cultural arts that are accessible to all people throughout Austin. (See also S P8)

